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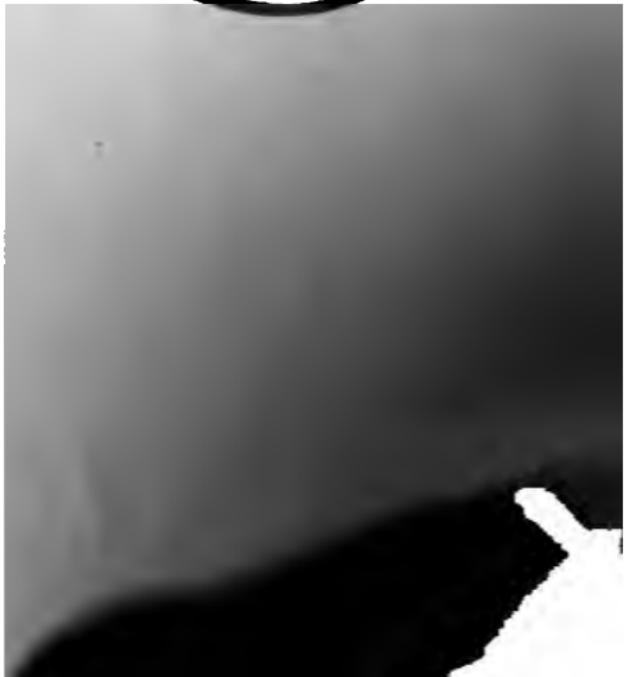
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• Incognito • Library •

THE SHEN'S
PIGTAIL







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BY

MR. M—

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CONTENTS.



PAGE

1. THE SHEN'S PIGTAIL	1
2. A LITTLE CHINESE PARTY	89
3. THE GENERAL	113
4. OFFICE MEN	141
Q., The Cold Precise.	
Jack-in-the-box S.	
A Powerful Hypocrite.	
The Juggernaut of Promotion.	
Wang.	
5. A SHOOTING TRIP ON THE GRAND CANAL	191
6. J.'s LAST HORROR	201

THE SHEN'S PIGTAIL

THE SHEN'S PIGTAIL.

I.

TWO of us were out for a shooting trip in the large and elegantly fitted native houseboat of Mr. Yang, who himself accompanied us with two friends. Mr. Yang was a rich Chinaman, retired from a very lucrative business in the importation of opium ; and having visited Bombay, and spent many years in Hongkong, had strong pro-foreign proclivities, one of which took the strange form of a love of sport. The indulgence of this, it will be understood, as indeed of any other barbarian practice, was quite out of the question by himself ; but he would sometimes, as on this occa-

sion, invite a foreigner to make use of his boat, and stroll out in the early morning for a chance shot when and where there were few natives about ; and during the day he would occasionally stroll along behind us to enjoy the forbidden savagery by proxy. The boat was well stocked with the best champagne, which is another extravagance much affected by rich Chinese in the foreign trade. The cabin was excellently furnished in foreign style with hanging lamps, mirrors, velvet lounges, and a handsome ormolu clock, a small group of Graces, and a few graceful Japanese bronzes. In the rack stood three ordinary doubled-barrelled twelve-bores, a sporting rifle of my companion's, Reed, and a very beautiful sixteen-bore repeater of American make, presented to Mr. Yang by some of the Hongkong foreign merchants whom he had been in the habit of entertaining up the Canton River as he did us now on the Yangtze ; while the opium pipe, lamp, and tray on the crimson velvet

divan was a present from the Parsees of the Bombay house, magnificently encased in gold filagree-work, set with small garnets and amethysts. The other valuables in the boat consisted of our watches and chains, the silks of the Chinese, and some fifty dollars in Mexicans and *cash*.

We were tied up at the foot of the little table-hill a few miles beyond Yueh-ho on that continuation of the Grand Canal which joins the Yangtze and Shanghai; and after an excellent day's sport, of which fifteen brace of pheasants and two deer hanging in the stern bore witness, had retired to rest, somnolent from fatigue and the excellent dinner, at which we had done justice between us to half a dozen of the big bottles of champagne; of which, however, it must be suggested that the boys, the cook, and the *laodah*, had not failed to take samples as each bottle was opened in the outer cabin. A bottle of sweet gin had been given to the crew—they would have smelt the

best Scotch with repugnance ; and they were now enjoying it with their pipes in the hold forward, completely battened down as usual, for the autumn nights were chilly, and a lusty Chinese coolie likes his kennel crowded and air-tight by preference. No watch was kept, it being quite unnecessary in these peaceful and secluded waters. The only habitation within two miles was the dilapidated temple on the bank with its solitary bonze, a little, shorn-pated, courteous old priest, whom he had invited on board to a glass of wine, and whom Mr. Yang had afterwards shown over the cabin, where he expressed a chuckling senile wonderment and feigned alarm at that deadly foreign thing, a double-barrelled gun, which hit birds flying, and which broke in two. Farther inland a few cottages were scattered here and there among the cotton-fields, from which could be heard the occasional yapping of dogs. Now and then the stillness of the autumn night was deliciously

joined by the cries of geese overhead, the passage of snipe, or the murmur of migrating locusts. The movement of all boats is stopped at sunset. A mile above, at Sin-fung, and three miles below, at Yueh-ho, wooden Customs barriers are thrown across the canal at night.

In the midst of this slumber we were aroused by feeling ourselves roughly handled. In fact, we were being bound hand and foot. Reed, my English companion, a strong man of remarkable promptness of action, at once broke free and struck his man down with a fist blow, in return for which he was felled with a hammer from behind and stabbed by his enraged assailant. Bound and helpless, we looked on, Reed of course insensible. The robbers, or pirates, assembled round the table, counted and packed up the watches, clothes, trinkets, the wine, and the dollars, while one of them unhinged the guns and put them in their respective cases with the ease of one accustomed to their use, and de-

parted. They were Chinese, with their pigtails curled round their heads, and wearing paper masks. There were five of them. We heard the jolting of the plank as they stepped ashore, and the grating of the gangway being pulled off after them. We then all began talking at once.

After a quarter of an hour's excitable exclamation, it became clear that we were absolutely helpless, and that everything of value in the boat had been carried off. We shouted to the crew, and we could hear sundry blows and thumps and muffled answers, but no one came. Making a virtue of necessity, we talked until we dozed off, waiting for the daylight.

The first boat that passed, Mr. Yang thrust his head through a panel and called to them. They came on board and undid our fastenings. Then we found the explanation of the muffled sounds from the crew. They were screwed down. The planks were hastily prised up.

On going ashore we were horrified to find the poor old priest lying foully murdered in his bed, and his face was slashed out of all recognition, as if the act had been inspired by a savage vindictiveness.

After making such inquiries in the neighbourhood as we could think of, and informing the local *tipaos* of the villages immediately above and below our position, and at Tantu, the mouth of the canal where it joins the Yangtze, we made all haste to return to Chinkiang, since the telegraph wire, which runs overhead all along the canal from Chinkiang to Shanghai (and not underground, as I have seen stated in a very accurate contemporary), has no transmitting offices at the riparian villages. Delayed by the heavy tide from the river, and the fall of the breeze, it was dusk before we got back to the city. Fortunately Chinese officials transact their business more by night than day ; Mr. Yang therefore decided to at once call on Yoo Laoveh, the Shen

of Chinkiang—that is to say, the constabulary, the superintendent of police, the chief detective, the investigating magistrate, the jury, and the judge, all covered by a single hat, for the populous city of Chinkiang and its environs for a radius of ten miles or more.

II.

YANG came back from his interview with the Shen with a request from Yoo Laoveh that I would myself privately visit him, for which purpose his chair was waiting round a corner. He would esteem it a favour if I would slip away without letting my domestics know, to avoid gossip, and embroilment with the English consul and commissioner (my chief), who would immediately raise a tremendous rumpus about encroaching on their prerogatives in summoning an Englishman to give evidence in a Chinese court. This was so true that it struck me as remarkably strange that the Shen should make

such a proposition to a young foreign assistant, who might naturally be expected not to take such a step without permission. I went with alacrity, as I loved to do things without permission. I was ushered into the Shen's private rooms, and found him a little, wizen-faced, shrunken creature in loose black silk, wearing tremendous yellow-glass goggles. He astounded me by speaking quickly, in English.

"I know you very well, Mr. M——, and I was sure that you would come."

I was very much surprised at this.

"You know the circumlocutions employed by Chinese witnesses, and I know the directer methods of your honourable countrymen. It will take me the whole night to get the few particulars I want from my excellent friend Mr. Yang."

Mr. Yang had only picked up a limited compradore's pidgin-English, and could not follow its meaning when spoken glibly and

grammatically. Hearing his name mentioned he bowed and smiled, and the Shen smiled and bowed.

“Question, sir; I shall answer briefly.”

“You returned from shooting before or after sunset?”

“At sunset.”

“Dined?”

“Ten minutes after. At table two hours.”

“To bed?”

“Half an hour after.”

“Drunk?”

“Very somnolent.”

“The crew?”

“One bottle of Old Tom. Still laughing and talking when I fell off to sleep.”

“Time of attack?”

“Impossible to say. All the time-pieces had been carried off.”

“Ah, ah. A very serious stumbling block. And between the time of the attack and the morning you all dozed at one period or another, and your slumbers were not altogether normal owing to the fact that

you drank a quart of Monopole each and retired to bed very soon after an exceptionally heavy meal. This I think is what you said?"

"It is."

"In that case there seems to me no means of fixing the precise time; it might have been anything between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. But stay! I think you mentioned a priest living on the bank; doubtless he would have heard something."

"The priest, sir, was found murdered in his bed."

Somehow there seemed to me something diabolical in the big tortoise-shell rimmed discs staring fixedly at me out of the wrinkled yellow face as he repeated—

"Oh, the priest was dead? In that case it seems to me a very difficult case—a very difficult case. Is not that your opinion also?"

I thought I detected in this and his way of watching me a typical Chinese desire to shirk the business; and as I was determined to make every effort to recover my gun and



the property of my kind host, Mr. Yang, I replied hotly—

“I don’t think the difficulty of fixing the time exhausts the investigation !”

“No, no ; no, no, Mr. M——. You are a gentleman of very acute perception ; I shall do my utmost to recover the stolen property and punish the culprits. Let us proceed. As an Englishman you will doubtless know better than myself how the robbers will try to dispose of the articles. Had they been purely Chinese goods I should have known where to search ; but guns, dear me, clocks—they would never be able to pawn them in a Chinese city.”

“No ; but they would be able to pawn them in Shanghai, or they could sell any single gun to a store-keeper at any of the treaty ports up the river. Second-hand guns are always being raffled by the store-keepers.”

“Dear me, dear me, a wide field of search. Now, would you assist me, my dear Mr. M——? You

gentlemen in the Customs know a great deal more about transport and trade routes than does a poor magistrate shut up in his *yamen* all day. *We* can never move about, make inquiries. Well, these thieves, they will want to get rid of their booty as quickly as possible ; now, what routes lie before them from the spot where you were robbed ? ”

“ If they want to get to Shanghai, they can go straight by canal via Soochow, which could be done within three days, or they could catch the daily river steamer, which takes about twenty hours from Chinkiang.”

“ Oh, oh ! is that so ? Then if they go by canal we can catch them by steamer. But what time did the steamer leave ? ”

“ On Sunday night, when the robbery and murder were committed, the *Yuenwo* left Chinkiang down about midnight ; she would stop at the first passenger station below Tantu about 3 a.m. There is no down-steamer to-night.”



"So that the robbers must have been at Chinkiang before 12 p.m., or at the passenger station of Santou by 3 a.m. How long would it take from your anchoring-place to these two points?"

"To Chinkiang, overland, three hours at least; to Santou, by river, with the stream, two hours."

"But to get into the river they must have followed the canal to Tantu by boat, which would necessitate passing the night-barrier at Yueh-ho. As, indeed, had they proceeded straight to Shanghai by canal, they would have had to pass the night-barrier at Sinfung."

"Precisely; unless they had left their boat the other side of either of these barriers."

"Then you think I ought to——?"

"Make stringent inquiries at the canal barriers above and below our position, at the guard-station on the only main road from Yueh-ho to Chinkiang, and telegraph at once to the Shanghai police a full description of the articles."

“ But suppose they should take the goods *up* river, to Hankow or Kiukiang ? ”

“ They could not have caught Sunday’s up-steamer, and to-night’s is due within an hour. I should suggest that you send some of your runners to overhaul passengers’ baggage. A gun-barrel is not so easily concealed.”

“ Excellent, Mr. M——, excellent. You would make a detective. I shall do everything you have advised, and I feel sure that you will own I have done my best. I also feel sure I shall recover many of the articles lost.” He looked at me, however, in what I thought a vindictive manner.

“ Unless——” I said.

“ Unless what ? ”

“ Unless the articles are at present lying concealed at Chinkiang.”

Yoo Laoyeh started.

“ At Chinkiang ? Oh, surely, no ; I thought you were quite of opinion that the thieves would carry them either to Shanghai or up river ? ”

“ I think it most probable that



the robbery was committed by Chinkiang men, and that the goods are now hidden here, and that therefore your endeavours should also be concentrated on finding out who arrived at Chinkiang between Sunday midnight and this morning. It ought not to be so difficult, seeing that no boats can pass up by night."

"Oh! in that I am sure you are mistaken. They would never bring the goods to Chinkiang; they would wait for the up- or down-steamer at Santou, or proceed to Shanghai by canal. Why should you think that the thieves come from this city?"

"Why, it is fairly natural. The sanpanmen on the foreshore are all thieves, or in league with thieves; they see our boat fitted up and ready to start; they hear where we are going; perhaps they have a member among our own crew, who tells them just where we shall anchor for the night, and that no watch is kept."

Yoo, who had looked rather gloomy when I began to accuse the

city over which he was supposed to watch, suddenly brightened up as if struck by an idea.

“ Ha ! a very important item. Let us proceed to the crew.”

He now questioned the owner of the boat, Mr. Yang, in Chinese, and then turned to me with what seemed —for it was all guess-work with such an inscrutable face—malicious triumph.

“ Very sad ; very sad. I think, my dear Mr. M——, that we had best confine our attention at present to the recovery of the articles without endeavouring too closely to hunt out the culprits. I ’m sure you will agree with me.”

“ Scarcely,” I replied. “ And the poor old murdered priest ?”

“ Oh, now, my dear Mr. M——, I think you are attaching too much importance to the life of a man who has already renounced the world and waits for nothing but death.”

“ I should feel it my duty, sir, to ask the consul to take the most energetic steps in tracing the crime,

unless you assure me that you intend to do so. May I ask what has caused you to wish to hush it up?"

"Sir," he said with much dignity, "I, the magistrate, desire to hush up the crime? If I made anything approaching such a suggestion, it was out of regard for the reputation of foreigners, which I cherish as dearly as my own. It was, Mr. M——, out of regard for *you*."

I was considerably taken aback.

"Mr. Yang's friends, and his crew, are all above suspicion; the latter have been in his employ for many years; there was only one stranger there."

"Well?" I said haughtily.

"That stranger was—your boy."

This was certainly a home-thrust. A European in China knows nothing of the character of his domestics. I had taken on Chung Yin, my boy, with very slight references, and since he had been in my employ, had heard not a few serious accusations against him from the other servants, which I dismissed as mere kitchen jealousies.

“ If there is the slightest suspicion against my servant I shall be the first to insist on its investigation.”

“ Very proper, very proper. At the same time I must tell you, Mr. M——, with much reluctance, that Chung Yin has a very bad record in my books, and that if he is even at large, it is solely owing to the protection of being in foreign employ.”

“ I have no desire to give shelter to rascals.”

This disclaimer, I felt, was not strictly true. Englishmen in China feel a lazy, hectoring pride in thinking that their name is an ægis against all the laws of the country.

“ And you are aware of the means employed in our benighted courts for the extraction of a confession from subjects ? ”

I was ; and the idea of that handsome young fellow, who, whatever his record, was an absolutely indispensable servant—the idea, I say, of this man writhing under the torture troubled me.

“ Very well,” I said angrily, “ if

your excellency desires not to press the investigation, I shall say nothing further until I have myself questioned the boy. In fact, I beg your pardon; I ought to thank you for the courtesy of your reluctance."

Yoo Laoyeh bowed and grinned.

"Come, now you are reasonable, my dear Mr. M——. Rest assured that I shall not neglect my duty, and that at the same time I am always exceedingly anxious to cause foreigners no annoyance with regard to their Chinese domestics. And now you will join me in a glass of wine, and within half an hour telegrams shall be sent to Shanghai and the river ports."

The Shen's servants now came in with wine glasses and a quart bottle of champagne swathed in a napkin.

"This is the same seal as we had on the boat," I remarked when I had sipped it, unthinkingly. "Really, Laoyeh, a small bottle would have been quite enough."

The Shen was blowing his nose, and took off his big yellow goggles

to wipe them. Whether it was the change produced in his expression by the disclosure of the piercing little black eyes in their network of wrinkles, or the mere fondness for stray shots, "Laoyeh," I said, with a smile, "when I came in you did me the honour to say you knew my face ; and now, as I depart, I have the honour to return the compliment."

Yoo seemed, to my surprise, literally to gasp, and hastily replaced his spectacles. He saluted Yang, and shook hands with me with his skinny claw-like fingers.

"Your gun shall be found, Mr. M——, your gun shall be found ; and your servant, your useful servant, you shall not be deprived of him ; we will take no further steps ; we will take no further steps. Is it not so ?" .

There was much that I did not like in the Shen's manner and words.

III.

THE only telegraph wire to Shanghai was in the hands of the Chinese authorities, so I thought it useless to wire myself, as if the Shen did not mean to, he would certainly see that I did not go behind him. I therefore prepared a list of the things for the Shanghai Municipal Police, to go down by Tuesday's steamer. It was now 10 p.m. of Monday night.

I immediately rang for the boy. He appeared, as ingenuous and unconscious of evil as usual.

“Did you see any of the robbers?”

“No, master; how could I? The first thing we knew was that we were nailed down. You saw that yourself, master.”

"That's true. Now, I want those screws."

The boy turned pale.

"What screws, master? I no have take your screws. You can count them; all have got inside that box."

Being addicted to canoe-building, I had a set of carpenter's tools, and a box containing every assortment of screws.

"Well, well, boy. You know I am a good master and wish you no harm. I want to find out who was at the bottom of this business. If you had a hand in it, tell me all about it, and I will see that you come to no harm. I will pay your passage down to Hongkong, and give you twenty dollars besides."

"Oh, master, I know nothing!"

"Very well. Now go down to the boat and get my things, and find at least *one* of those screws with which you were screwed down."

He started off, evidently in great distress.

"Boy!" I said, calling him back.

"One word of advice—don't run away. The steamers are watched at both ends, I know your home, and the Shen knows your haunts in Chinkiang. You are perfectly safe as long as you trust in me." He went.

Well, Chung Yin never came back, and not one of those screws was to be found on the boat. Furthermore, the holes had been jagged and enlarged, so that it was impossible to guess the diameter and twist. At the same time I could not assert that any of my screws were missing, as I did not know their original number. But on Tuesday morning, when there was no doubt that he had fled, the matter seemed to be put beyond question. On searching his room I found not only in the drawer under some papers half a dozen brass screws with chips of wood in the thread, but, in the wadding of the mattress, my own watch. I was wearing on the boat only a common Waterbury watch, with a gold chain. The chain was not there too.

I could not do less than immediately report the whole matter to the Commissioner, who at once informed the Taotai, in order that no time should be lost in effecting Chung Yin's arrest. I, you may be sure, had not this object in view in reporting him, but merely that of not becoming myself an "accessory after the fact." I consoled myself by reflecting that the boy had a whole night's start, and was forewarned of the dangers he ran. The same evening after dusk the coolie announced a Chinaman, a teacher, he thought; and Yoo Laoyeh, the redoubtable Shen in person, who could never leave his *yamen* without a score of followers and a braying of trumpets, paid me a visit incognito.

"I could not rest without returning you your polite visit last night," he began, carefully closing the door after him.

"Thank you."

"But how sagacious of you, how sagacious of you to have already unearthed the chief culprit and re-

covered your property ! And the screws ! Really, Mr. M——, you are a born detective."

" Why ? "

" Why ? Why, that discovery of the screws proves the whole matter conclusively ! Two - inch brass screws ! No native carpenter ever uses brass screws. And, I think the Taotai informed me, they correspond with those kept in your tool-chest, to which no one but your boy had access ? "

" Perfectly true."

" You handed them over, I think, to the Commissioner ? "

" I did."

" Well, they have, of course, been placed in my hands. I have examined them, and found bits of wood in the hollow parts, and I have even compared this wood with the holes from which they were pulled, and find it is the same, so that the whole thing is conclusively proved, thanks to your sagacity, Mr. M——, thanks to your sagacity. There is only one stranger in the boat, the only one,

indeed who knows what valuables are on board, and who, from his diverse experience in foreign service, knows the value of sporting guns and how they can easily be disposed of ; knows furthermore, as an ordinary thief would not, how to detach the barrels from the stock. No ordinary native thief, I am sure, would ever saddle himself with such a conspicuous article as a foreign gun, which he would never dare to offer to a pawnshop, or native 'fence,' where alone he ever sells stolen goods. Observe, also, that no body of thieves would go all the way from Chinkiang on a wild goose hunt without knowing within ten miles where you will anchor for the night. Who knows where that will be ? The boatmen ? They have never been on that part of the canal before at all. Who, then ? Why, no one but your boy, who has accompanied you to the same spot a score of times. That is not all ; alas, my dear Mr. M——, I am so sorry. You know I foresaw this, and did my very best to dissuade

you from pressing the matter. Your favourite boy, whom you have done your best to shield, a thief, and, alas, we fear, something worse, hunted all over the Yangtze, and then his head stuck on a pole, ten yards from your door, and a crowd round it every day saying, 'A foreigner's boy ; Mr. M——'s boy of the Customs !' So sad, so sad ! Yes, I say, that is not all. We are coming to the worst part. Why was the priest killed ? Why could he not have been bound, as you were, or, if that was not sufficient, gagged ? It was dark, and the thieves wore masks ; they had no fear of identification. What face alone was well known to him ? Chung Yin's ; Chung Yin, your boy, who had put up at the same place a score of times, and who, as the villagers know, was on bad terms with the poor old priest on account of his overbearing manner of ordering him about—overbearing because he was in foreigner's employ. The priest, there can be no doubt, saw Chung Yin in consultation with

some of the thieves—the boatmen can prove that Chung Yin went ashore on some pretext after you had returned from shooting. And so the priest, who, if questioned, would be certain to cast suspicion on your boy, was murdered. And then, if any final proof was needed, you, Mr. M——, so clever, hit on it at once. You suspected Chung Yin ; you cast about in your mind, and then, with that penetration which you possess so marvellously, Mr. M——, you said to yourself, 'If he stole my screws he is guilty ; if he is guilty he will flee. I shall be sorry to see the poor fellow tortured and decapitated ; whatever his faults, he has been a good servant to me. I will say the one word "screws." Then I shall either be convinced of his innocence, or, if he is guilty, give him a night's start, with a few valuable hints, without compromising myself. And what has happened ? Chung Yin has fled, and there can be no further possible doubt of his guilt."

Yoo leant back in his chair, after this powerful denunciation, energetically delivered, and fixed his enormous impenetrable spectacles on my face, with hands tucked into his sleeves.

For myself, I was at first quite overpowered. This remarkable man seemed to have divined my thoughts, and to have concatenated an irrefragable chain of evidence against poor Chung. To tell the truth, I was for the moment frightened of him, despite certain very remarkable points. However, recovering myself, I determined to see what new complexion these points would put on the case. So, fixing my eyes steadily on the Shen's mobile mouth, since his eyes and his hands, such important indicators of confusion, were concealed, I began—

“ You have been very kind in praising my penetration, Yoo Laoyeh, far more than it deserves standing by itself ; while placed beside the wonderful example of intuition and deduction you have done me the

honour to display, your praise would sound almost ironical did I not know how candid and friendly you have been to me. However, as discussion brings new points to view, allow me to go over your evidence. In the first place you say, Laoyeh, that you examined the screws and found the grains of wood identical with the decking?"

The Shen seemed very considerably surprised by this beginning. He bent forward.

"Well, Laoyeh, that was a very important discovery, and a very difficult one when made only with spectacles. Now this thing," I said, opening a box, "is a microscope."

"Yes, yes?"

"First," I said, leaning back and disappointing him, "I must tell you, Laoyeh, that I do a great deal of amateur carpentering, and have had some experience in different kinds of pine."

He looked at me expectantly.

"So that, with the aid of this microscope, which magnifies things

very considerably, I could, for instance, detect the difference in the grain of Hankow pine, with which native boats are planked, and Oregon pine, which I use for my canoe, and many bits of which are now lying in the kitchen downstairs, broken up for firewood."

The Shen seemed to get grey about the mouth. "Impossible!" he murmured.

"Further, the deck of Mr. Yang's boat is varnished with wood-oil, while the discarded pieces from my boat are covered with white or green paint. Of course there is no question here of Oregon pine and paint; only we may expect that the wood on the screw shall be Hankow pine, and not improbably contain a speck of oil varnish near the head."

Yoo Laoyeh was obviously displeased.

"But what is the use of discussing this, since the screws are in my *yamen*, and have already been sufficiently examined?"

"Stay, Laoyeh. When I handed

the screws to the Commissioner I took the liberty of abstracting one, just for a little amusement with my microscope." And I drew it from my pocket, carefully placed in a match-box, and placed it under the glass, the focus of which I adjusted, and then, bringing the lamp near, I asked the Shen to look, which, with an appearance of eagerness and alarm, he did.

"Great heavens!" he murmured, "there is certainly paint on that screw: blue or green, I cannot distinguish which."

"Now compare this very considerable chip, which has come off with one of the screws, with a similar bit from a plank of *my* boat, and one from the actual plank of Mr. Yang's boat. Which does it most resemble?"

"I cannot possibly distinguish between them. No one could. The proof is of no weight whatever."

"In that case, then, compare the original screw with an exactly similar one which I myself drove into the

plank of Mr. Yang's boat, and wrenched out again. Is the colour of the two woods in the thread the same?"

The Shen took off his spectacles, readjusted the focus, and stared into the microscope for some time. Then he sat down, being careful to put on his spectacles the moment he lifted his head. He had been deciding on his course of action; I noticed on looking through the microscope that it was an impossible focus for any sight.

"My dear Mr. M——! You grieve me very much. You alarm me seriously. You desire to shield your boy—very laudable, certainly, but in this case—only, be careful! That screw that you show me there, in so interesting a manner, is not identical with those found in Chung Yin's room!"

I could scarcely conceal a gesture of triumph and discovery. The Shen prevaricate? I was on the track of a suspicion that his able accusation against my boy had

almost dispelled, or at least, overwhelmed.

“ Well, well, Laoyeh,” I said, laughing, “ you will forgive me if my vanity, swollen by your flattering remarks, sought to obtain credit for more perspicuity than it had a right to. I will continue my remarks.”

This was a false move. The Shen, suddenly convinced that I was deceiving him as he was deceiving me, was on his guard, and angry.

“ Passing over the incident of the screw, the next point against Chung Yin is that he alone knew where we should anchor. I admit the plausibility of that. Then, Laoyeh, comes a very damning fact, the discovery of which, by you who never leave your *yamen* and who heard of the whole affair only last night for the first time, is an evidence of your marvellous experience in investigation. It is the fact that Chung Yin’s face was well known to the priest, and that the priest had a grudge against Chung Yin. I shudder to think that Chung has been in

my service, for at the first glance this seems to convict him as the prime instigator, if not the perpetrator, of the murder. It is terrible. At the same time, Laoyeh, I submit to your experienced judgment whether another view is possible."

"What is it?" he said suspiciously. "I must confess I cannot possibly conceive any other view."

"It is this. While the priest was the only one who could identify Chung Yin among the boat's occupants, Chung Yin was the only one on board the boat who could identify the priest!"

The Shen leapt up from his chair, but immediately sat down again.

"Continue; continue. Are there any more counts?"

"There is one more. Is it necessary for me to mention it?"

"Necessary?" replied the Shen, who had recovered his self-control; "I don't understand what you mean by necessary."

"Then I will continue."

"Do so."

"The final and conclusive proof of my boy's guilt is his flight."

"Exactly," said Yoo, rubbing his hands, as if he felt on safe ground again. "I don't see how you can possibly get over that."

"That is so," I replied reflectively. "If Chung Yin has run away after what I said to him, nothing will persuade me that he is not actually a murderer."

"What do you mean by 'If Chung Yin has run away'?"

Looking very fixedly at the Shen, I said slowly—

"I do not believe that Chung Yin has run away."

The Shen hastily pulled off his dark spectacles, and thrust his head forward to fix me with his malevolent serpent's eyes—for a moment; then, as if he could not restrain himself, he sprang forward and seized me with both hands by the breast of my coat.

"What do you mean? or rather, what do you know? Come, tell me, what do you know?"



"Won't you sit down, Laoyeh? I think I am stronger than you, and you will fatigue your thumbs."

The Shen recovered himself and sat down. "I am an old man, Mr. M——, and I get nervous. I have come to see you simply as a magistrate anxious to do his duty in sifting a crime, and anxious to spare a foreigner, and especially one whom he holds in great esteem, from an awkward publicity. I told you frankly how the case appeared to me, without, you will believe me, the slightest bias against your servant. I consider the chief proof of his guilt was in his flight; and I took this flight for granted because it was yourself who announced it."

"I announced simply that my servant had *disappeared*."

"And that he had concealed part of the booty in his mattress."

"And that a watch, valued five dollars, without a chain, valued thirty dollars, was found in his mattress."

"And that the screws employed

by the robbers were concealed in his drawer."

"And that screws, hammered into and wrenched out of an old painted plank of my canoe lying in the kitchen for firewood, were found placed conspicuously in his drawer."

"I cannot possibly conceive what you are driving at by putting these distorted interpretations on ordinary evidences of guilt, such as invariably lead to the conviction of thieves."

"I cannot conceive of any experienced thief, such as this one must have been, leaving such proofs behind him; of hiding a worthless watch, and not hiding the valuable chain attached to it; of forgetting the screws, when, as you tell me, the word 'screws' put him to flight."

"Admirably reasoned Mr. M——; admirably reasoned. It is a pity that your last words neutralise all the rest."

"What do you mean, Laoyeh?"

"Why, the undoubted fact that the word 'screws' *did* put him to

flight, or, if you cling to the euphemism, cause him to disappear."

"There is a very strong difference between the two, Laoyeh," I said meaningly. "As strong a difference, perhaps, as between murdering and being murdered."

The Shen made a gesture as of one putting away an unpleasant picture, but took no other notice of the reference.

"I cannot understand you. You own that you spoke to him of the screws, that you indirectly accused him of complicity, and that you said, 'Don't run away.'"

"I do."

"And that, two minutes afterwards, he went out, and never came back again."

"I do."

"In that case I think it is useless to waste further words. No sane person can possibly doubt that he took the alarm, if it wasn't a hint, and fled precipitately, so alarmed as to neglect even the precaution of throwing away the screws."

“One moment, Yoo Laoyeh,” I said, standing up before him, and my voice trembling with anger. “I have only one question to ask. If you can give me a satisfactory answer I shall be convinced.”

“Well, what is it?” he replied, apparently feeling quite at his ease with this powerful argument.

“It is this,” I said impressively, laying a stress on each word. “*How is it that my talk with Chung Yin about the screws, spoken to him alone, with no witnesses, is known to you?*”

IV.

THE Shen fell back in his chair, and covered his face with his hands.

“Great God,” he exclaimed, “I have betrayed myself !”

“You have,” I said sternly. “From the moment you produced Mr. Yang’s champagne, which is only put up in quarts, which is not sold in Shanghai, and the taste of which I shall not confuse with any other seal (for it was I who recommended it to him), my suspicions were aroused. On the way home I went over our conversation in my mind. I was struck by four things. One was, that you seemed considerably startled when I remarked the similarity of the wine with that stolen from the boat. Another was, that

you seemed annoyed that I should urge investigation in Chinkiang, and over anxious to dismiss this idea from my mind and direct my attention to the provenance of the thieves elsewhere. A third was, that you should feign ignorance of the main feature of the case, which could not have failed to be reported to you"—here I eyed him closely, and he quailed. "I refer to the murder of the priest." He put his hands over his eyes. "And when I told you of it, you treated it in a way peculiarly callous for an educated official and a magistrate, who of all men is supposed to abhor crime. Finally, Mr. Yoo, when you removed your spectacles—"

"Yes? What then?"

"When you removed your spectacles I was at once struck by a resemblance to some face that I had seen, to some face the recollection of which had been summoned by our conversation, but which at the time I could not for the life of me specify."

Yoo was staring at me in abject terror. "And has your memory since enabled you to identify the fancied resemblance?" he asked, in a low voice.

"That I shall not at present say."

"Oh, this is terrible!" I thought I heard him murmur. Then, resignedly, "Continue."

"So much for our first meeting. I then came home and questioned my boy. His replies seemed to me those of an innocent man; but I placed no reliance on that, as the face of a Chinese servant, trained from its earliest youth to the deception of the foreigner, is, I confess, beyond my penetration. But, I will tell you frankly, I promised him my protection if he were guilty, and I am convinced that, however great his panic, he would put full reliance in at least the good faith of that promise. I am convinced that, had he doubted my ability to carry it out, he would have said to me, 'Master, I am guilty, and should like to flee to-night'; and I should

have given him a supply of ready money, and provided a reasonable excuse for his absence."

"Oh, oh," muttered the Shen ; "you are bold."

"This was at 10 or 11 p.m. last night. Feeling very anxious at his non-return, I sat out in the front balcony listening. At length, two hours after his departure—that is to say, at midnight—I hear a tap at the gate, which the watchman, out of impatience or spitefulness to Chung Yin, had padlocked, as he does when all the domestics are at home. The tap being repeated more loudly, the watchman woke up and growled out, 'Who's there ?' 'Me,' was the reply. 'Who's me ?' 'Chung Yin.' The watchman then opened the door, and a man entered, who spoke very seriously to the watchman, who in his turn answered much more respectfully than was usual when Chung Yin returned home late, as I am well aware that he often did. The late arrival then went round to the servants' quarters at the back,

and I, feeling fully justified in playing the spy, ran across in bare feet to the back balcony, and leaned over to listen. The new-comer, who I naturally supposed to be Chung Yin, went straight to the coolie's room, woke him, and a light was struck. Unfortunately I could not see his face through the paper window, nor could I catch what was said. After a short colloquy Chung Yin came out, and after going into his own room went away again, the watchman opening the door for him very noiselessly, and locking it in the same manner behind him without a word. Very good, I thought, not without a feeling of disappointment ; Chung Yin has found that there is a suspicion against him, and has determined to flee. He thinks it too late to wake me, but he has to get some things and possibly remove suspicious traces from his room ; and he has bribed the gate-keeper to say nothing, and made arrangements with the coolie against the future. I then

slept uneasily and heavily ; I fancied I heard some one creeping about in my store-room, where the tools are kept, but dismissed it as a dream. Having formed this conjecture, what was my surprise when the coolie came to inform me that Chung Yin had gone, insisting, to my questions, that he had not come back at all, and himself suggesting that Chung Yin was the thief, and that I should search his room. In the search it was practically he who laid my hand on the concealed articles. I ate my breakfast in deep thought. What, I asked myself, could possibly be Chung Yin's idea in arranging with the coolie to betray him ?—for I at once perceived that the concealed articles were what is called a put-up job, a conclusion which I quickly verified by my microscope and the screw. I was completely baffled when you came in to-night. I listened to your denunciation, and was almost convinced when, at the last moment, to use your own words, you betrayed yourself. You repeated

to me my last conversation with Chung Yin. The only person who could have possibly overheard me was the coolie, and he does not know a word of English. I myself made no mention of that conversation in my report to the Commissioner. Therefore your only possible source of information was Chung Yin himself.

“This puzzled me severely. Chung Yin confided in you. He makes arrangements for his own denunciation. You come and denounce him. The only thing that I refused to believe was that Chung should willingly betray to you my own desire to abet his flight. However, still in the dark, I cast doubt on all your ingenious evidence and watched you closely. And now shall I tell you what conclusion I have come to?”

“Speak; you have discovered all,” in an almost inaudible voice.

“From our first conversation, my notice of the wine and the resemblance, you thought I suspected you,

the Shen, of complicity in a theft and murder. You determined at all hazard to stop my investigations ; and the means you chose was to mass incontestable proofs against my unfortunate boy, so that, if by any accident you should not succeed—as, however, you felt assured of doing—in convincing me that he was the culprit, you would at least be able to purchase my silence as a ransom for his life. With this view you had my gate watched to see if I should endeavour to push the investigation. Perhaps you followed me home yourself. You saw the boy come out. You followed him to the boat and heard him asking for the screws. Then you set your diabolical plan in motion. You kidnapped poor Chung on his way back to me ; this at once gave you your strongest proof of guilt against him by causing it to appear that he had ffc i. Then, by cajolery or torture—which,” I said sternly, glaring at him—“which of the two remains to be seen—you extracted from him the sum of my

questions about the screws. You next came to the gate and obtained entrance by pretending to be Chung Yin, and secured the gate-keeper's silence and the coolie's co-operation by threats of punishment, the perfect efficiency of which, from an official to a servant, is undeniable. The coolie came upstairs while I was asleep and stole the screws and hammered them into a bit of fire-wood ; these and the paltry watch he concealed in Chung Yin's room. Thus you have utterly over-reached yourself ; you have shown me that Chung Yin is in your power, and the stolen property in your possession. I demand the release of my boy and the restitution of all the property."

Yoo remained collapsed within himself for some minutes. Then he looked at me steadily, and spoke.

" You have divined my purpose with unerring skill. Would to heaven you were my friend instead of my enemy—that, however, may perhaps yet be. My purpose was,

as you have said, either to convince you of his guilt or use his life as an exchange for your silence. You demand his release. I, in exchange, demand your silence."

I was staggered by his audacity.

"But it seems to me, with the knowledge I possess, you are scarcely in a position to make conditions on your side."

"My dear Mr. M——! You are young and enthusiastic. I am an old fox. I remain exactly in my original position. What do you know? Absolutely nothing detrimental to me. You have not the slightest clue to the real robbers. You imagine me to be the possessor of the goods because I offered you, my guest, a glass of champagne in which you detect a fancied resemblance to a wine of which you had imbibed a considerable quantity the previous night, so that it impregnated your palate. You believe that I caused the watch to be hid in your boy's mattress, and therefore I have possession of the goods.

There is not the slightest proof. You say I have kidnapped your boy. The gate-keeper and the coolie will swear that he returned at midnight to get some clothes, and told them he was leaving. Even were it proven that Chung Yin had been carried off to my *yamen*, what does it show? That I was doing my duty, and arrested the principal criminal at the moment of his flight. Your whole accusation against me is a tissue of cobwebs, which would collapse in the strong air of public investigation. The result for yourself, you, a young foreigner in the service of the Chinese Emperor, bringing so serious an accusation against one of the Emperor's old and tried judges, would be disastrous. The Inspector-General, you know very well, would never retain in his service an Assistant against whom a powerful native official should urge a plausible complaint of the most serious possible nature.

“On the other side, what is my position? I have in my hands your

boy. The proofs against him, in a Chinese court, are overwhelming. I should gain the very highest applause for promptness and acumen ; it would ensure for me the step of *chih-fu* at the very next vacancy. He would inevitably be convicted of murder, and for the murder of a priest he may be condemned to the slicing process—months of every kind of torture, and then limb by limb hacked off from the living body and thrown to the dogs !

“ All this, my own advancement and the life of a man in whom you are interested, I offer you in return for a few idle surmises ; and that not from fear, I swear, but solely out of admiration and a desire for your friendship. What do you say, Mr. Mason ? Shall we hush it up ? ”

I remained silent, my head buried in my hands. Before my eyes was the picture of a man’s limbless trunk, still quivering and spurting blood from the sockets of his neck, his arms, and his legs. At length I looked up.

"We will hush it up. I promise to advance no accusations, no insinuations against you in return for the release of my boy."

Yoo's countenance expressed the most unequivocal relief. He rose gaily.

"That is all I ask. Your simple word satisfies me completely. Chung Yin shall return to you in half an hour, amply compensated for anything he may have suffered. And now that we have come to an amicable settlement, tell me about that resemblance you fancied you saw in my face. Have you 'located' it yet?"

"I have not."

Yoo Laoyeh took off his hat and raised his hand to his brow. He held it there a moment as if reflecting, then slowly replaced his hat.

"I was about to become young, enthusiastic, confiding again, as I have never been since an episode that occurred to me twenty years ago; but, as you see, my dear Mr. M—, the bitterness of experience

has come to my rescue, and saved you the infliction of a confidence. It may come—it may come yet. I trust that this antagonism will open the way to our future friendship. In the meantime, if there is any sort of service you require in this country, I have the power to aid you; you have only to send me a note sealed with this seal," and he placed a small stone seal on the corner of the mantelpiece. "And now I offer you my hand in token of friendship."

I opened the door and gravely bowed him out.

He drew his hand back with a sigh, and I watched his little bowed and shrunken form hobble away with mingled feelings of curiosity and abhorrence.

"If it was n't for that pigtail," I muttered to myself, "and if I had n't seen the corpse, I could swear it was the murdered priest!"

V.

ON Tuesday, the second night after the piracy of our boat and the murder of the priest, then, I had given my word to the Chinese magistrate, or Shen, of Chin-kiang to make no accusations against him on condition that my boy, Chung Yin, whom he had kidnapped, should be released. This did not prevent me thinking about it as I lit a cigar to wait for Chung Yin's return. The case was a very remarkable one; the Shen had undoubtedly had a hand in the crime. The most remarkable fact was that I was sure I had seen the Shen's face in some connection therewith, which I could not locate, and that the Shen had as much as avowed that I was

right; and at the moment of his departure my memory identified the resemblance, and I had exclaimed to myself, "If it wasn't for his pigtail, and that I had seen the corpse, I could have sworn it was the murdered priest!" Now this was very remarkable. There was not the slightest doubt that the priest was dead, and that the priest had not a hair on his pate, and it was impossible to suppose that a Chinese magistrate, that is to say, a man presumably of honourable and unbroken record, could have lost his pigtail, for this extremity of disgrace is dealt to convicts, and the worst of convicts, alone. To cut off a Chinaman's pigtail is only one degree less obnoxious than to cut off a Chinamen's head—it is equivalent to penal servitude for life. And then the Shen had taken off his cap, and I had seen the wrinkled forehead and the roots of the brushed-back hair with my own eyes. And yet, why had the priest's face been disfigured? And why had the Shen quailed so obvi-

ously when I accused him, by innuendo, of suppressing my boy, because my boy alone could identify the priest? However, I was of a lazy disposition, and already tired of the mystery; and at this juncture of my reflections Chung Yin returned.

Now the first thing I did to Chung Yin was very strange of a Britisher towards his despised domestic—I held out my hand.

“Give me your hand, Chung Yin; I am sorry if I appeared to suspect you.”

Chung Yin drew back in a sort of alarm.

“Oh, master, you were quite right. Everything was against me.”

“Give me your hand.”

He could not refuse this time, so he timidly put out his hand. I drew it towards the lamp and examined the thumb; then I dropped it with a sigh of relief—there was no sign of mutilation. Chung Yin perceived my intention, and instead of a grateful smile for so much

solicitude, turned deadly pale, and said nothing.

“And so, Chung Yin, my lad, the Shen kidnapped you ?”

“Oh no, master !”

“You went to him, then, of your own accord ?”

“Yes, master.”

“In order to tell him that I, an Assistant in the Customs, was conniving at your escape from justice ?”

“Yes, master,” in a low, shame-faced voice, and head down-hung.

“And he treated you kindly ?”

“Oh yes, master !”

“That's all right. He himself gave me a different impression, but I dare say I misunderstood him. Now, Chung Yin, will you tell me what you think of the affair ? It seems to me the Shen had a hand in it himself. What do you think ?”

“Please, master, let me go to bed. I would rather not talk any more about it.”

“Very well, my lad ; if you have nothing to complain of we will let the matter drop, and never mention

it again. Good-night ;" and I laid my hand on his shoulder.

Chung Yin started, and uttered a cry of pain.

"What is the matter, Chung Yin ?"

"What, master ?"

"You called out 'Oh !' when I put my hand on your shoulder."

"No, master ; you must have been mistaken."

"But I am sure you did, and to make certain I shall try again," raising my hand.

Chung Yin's shoulder shrank down before I touched him ; his face assumed a look of beseeching terror, and he hastened to the door.

"Come, Chung Yin, this won't do ; you are hiding something."

"No, master ; only the sun the other day made my back sore, and you hurt me."

"Chung Yin, take off your coat."

"Oh no, master, no !"

"You need not be bashful ; I only want to see if it needs the doctor."

“Oh no, master, it is nothing. Please let me go to bed ; I am tired.”

“Take off your coat, boy, and no foolery. I give you three, and I shall take it off myself.”

Chinese do not wear shirts ; their underlinen consists of white cotton coats buttoned down the middle. Chung Yin, with an expression of shame and misery impossible to describe, took off his two coats together, or rather slipped his arms out of the sleeves, and left them hanging over his shoulders. I removed them.

Chung Yin was a fop, and a favourite with the ladies ; his skin was as white as a pampered young Englishman's. But it bore now a scar which made me shudder. Over the shoulder, down the breast, ran two or three purple weals. I laid the coats gently on his back again, and Chung Yin sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands, sobbing.

It was some moments before I

could address the poor fellow. My friends used to laugh at me for the gentleness with which I always treated him afterwards.

“ My poor Chung Yin ! my poor Chung Yin ! Was it molten brass ? ”

“ Yes, master,” he murmured between his sobs.

“ Well, never mind, my lad. What’s done can’t be exactly undone, but, by God, it shall be repaired ! I will give you fifty dollars to-morrow, and the doctor shall dress it up so that it won’t be able to be seen a couple of weeks hence”—for Chinese, from high to low, go stripped to the waist in their own rooms during the summer, and such a scar, indelible, alas ! I knew told only one tale, that of criminal examination—“ and for to-night take this pot of cold cream and this handkerchief and make the best of it. No one shall ever know anything about it.”

When I said it should be repaired my heart said it should be avenged : but I knew that such a word would

only terrify poor Chung Yin more, for a Chinaman always feels that he is powerless to escape the wrath of his officials, and is cowed into desiring nothing more than submission and silence. But from that moment I was determined to hunt the Shen down; when I knew all that was to be known I would see how far my promise bound me in the use I should make of my knowledge.

VI.

TWO weeks later I received the following account from my friend, Mr. Paunch, detective, of Shanghai :

“SIR,—I received your letter Wednesday morning per ss. *Pekin*, containing account of piracy on houseboat in Grand Canal, near Chin-kiang, Sunday, with list of stolen articles, viz., 4 guns and 1 rifle, clock, statuette, watches, chains, silks, etc. I at once sent round to the pawn shops, which are thoroughly under our thumb, and found that the clock and watches had been pawned, but no guns. Fancying that the pirates may have been afraid to carry guns by steamer on account of Customs baggage-search, stationed man at

Hongkew jetty for Soochow canal-boats, but no result. Things all pawned by same man in five different shops during afternoon of Monday, from 1.30 p.m. to 3 p.m. ; that is, one hour after arrival of down-steamer. Got a fair description of man and his dress, which was that of fashionable young student with appearance of opium smoker. Inquired at all opium divans, also well under our inspection, and found the shop where our man had smoked Monday evening by description of his dress—strawberry-flowered silk blouse and mauve satine leggings, gilt buttons, eagle-feather fan, watch and chain. Paid for his pipe with Carolus dollar, which denotes Kinkiang man ; spoke with Kinkiang accent. Took a rickshaw from opium shop, and by description and Kinkiang accent managed to find the coolie that drew him, who gave us the addresses he ran to that evening. His manner made me suspicious of truth, and I inquired casually as to

his character in the office. One of our constables recognised his number, and said he was certain he had seen him drive down to the Central jetty at 10 p.m. of Monday night with a fare ; the rickshaw coolie didn't mention this. Inquired of the sanpanmen, and after some trouble got one of them to recollect that he had rowed a fare over to Tungkadoo. Inquired of river-police and Tungkadoo constable, who could give no help, as a dozen sanpans had come over during the evening. After wasting a day searching Tungkadoo and watching the jetties, and offering rewards among the sanpanmen, one came forward and said he had taken a fare from Tungkadoo to McBain's wharf at 10.30 of Monday night ; described the man exactly as I have, accent, fan, and all. Began to perceive that I was dealing with an old hand ; he had crossed the river to put off the scent, and then doubled back and caught the up-steamer, probably for Chinkiang or Kinkiang,

with the proceeds of his sales. That Tungkadoo trick had just made me too late to wire Kinkiang to look out for him.

“ Set to work meanwhile on the other clue. On return of *Yuenwo* from up-trip, inquired of compradore what passengers he had taken on board 3 a.m. Sunday morning at first call-station below Tantu. There were only three passengers ; two were traders whom he knew by sight as continually travelling up and down, and above suspicion ; the third was a big, rough fellow in coolie dress, carrying a small, but apparently heavy, parcel in a cloth, and seeming dead beat, as though he had been working hard. I at once concluded that this was one of the robbers, deputed to carry the clock and watches to his *confrère* at Shanghai. Could not trace him, however, so made a note of his description. But it gives us one important point—namely, that of the five robbers only one went to Shanghai by steamer, and that with-

out the guns. Have made minute inquiries along the canal between Soochow and Chinkiang, and feel convinced that other four men have not passed that way. Should have supposed they went overland from Yueh-ho to Chinkiang but for one man turning up at the Santou passenger station. Have sent up one of my best natives to Tantu, where canal joins river, and he is pretty convinced that a one-masted boat, with four or five men, passed out into the river at 1 a.m., although the canal likin men swear black and blue that they never raised the barriers all night for any boat whatever. If this is true the robbers must have left their boat at the mouth of the canal and gone and returned on foot to attack you. At any rate pretty certain that they all went down river in their boat and landed one man with the clock at Santou passenger station before 3 a.m. of Monday morning, and then went on their way, the remaining four, with the guns and

the boat. The question is, Which way did they go—up, down, or inland?

“Having got so far, which amounted to nothing at all, had one of those marvellous pieces of luck that upset the cleverest of rogues. On Friday morning a rickshaw coolie brought into the station a fan left in his rickshaw overnight. It was an eagle-feather fan with ivory handle. I sent for the coolie and got a description of the fares he had carried that day. By all that’s improbable one was our friend in the strawberry silk coat and mauve unmentionables. This quite bucked me up, especially as the coolie who brought the fan in was quite reliable, and an old friend of mine. He had driven his fare up to one of the flash tea-shops in the French settlement about mid-day, and soon after leaving saw the fan and went back with it; but the ‘boys’ swore no such person as he described had ever been in their shop, and turned him out. However, we

advertised the fan and placed a watch on the tea-house, although I did n't dare send in any of our natives, as the house had a bad reputation, and he might be recognised and alarm our bird. I wished then I had old bald-headed Chinaman Jack, the Hong Kong 'tec. of my early days, who could assume any disguise, from a priest to a mandarin. Wonder what has become of old Jack? He left the police twenty years ago.

"This fact of our thief being still in the port put me on a new tack; I must have been mistaken in supposing he went on board the up steamer at Hongkew. But one of the sanpanmen swore he took him to Hongkew; how then did he get back to the French settlement, supposing he lived there? It was not likely he would have walked after smoking as much opium as he appeared to have; so I made inquiries among the rickshaws, an easy matter. It appeared certain that no such man as our friend with

the fan had been driven from the American settlement to the French. As a chance I then sent for the sanpanman who had so glibly volunteered the information about carrying Mr. Fan to Hongkew, and told him he had been telling me a lie, and that I was going to send him into the City.¹ This frightened him, and although it was only bluff on my part he confessed, in exchange for a promise and a bribe, that it was all a make-up tale about the fugitive going over to Tungkadoo and doubling back ; he had simply gone straight up to the French settlement by the first sanpan, not crossing the river at all. He said that he and the other sanpanman both belonged to a secret

¹ Chinese criminals are dealt with either at the Mixed Court or sent to the native tribunal in the city of Shanghai, whose walls lie just beyond the foreign settlements. They naturally have the greatest dread of being delivered over to their own magistrates on account of the torture and the "squeezes" (bribes) exacted by the *yamen* runners (police).

society, and that the fugitive was one of their chiefs, and had ordered them to put the police off the scent.

“Thus it was I was getting on a hot scent. The rickshaw man must also have been acting under the secret society for telling me a lie in the first instance. This is the chief trouble with the Shanghai thieves; they form themselves into societies and have their own members among the rickshaws and sanpans, who put us off the scent just when we think we have found the clue.

“To make a long story short, we collared our man with infinite trouble, by his sending a friend to reclaim the fan. No wonder he was so anxious about it: we followed the friend up to the tea-house and made a rush, and there was our culprit with the bottom of the fan-handle screwed off, drawing a little roll of paper from the hollowed ivory; before we had time to prevent him he had held it over the opium lamp and burnt it. I was a

fool not to think of examining that ivory fan-handle. However, we had our man; not that he was much put out, for he put on the insolent air that none but a Chinese 'graduate' can assume, and asked us what the devil we meant by invading his room? These Chinese gentlemen have the haughty cheek of the biggest aristocrats in England. We said he would soon see what we meant, and carried him off, hand-cuffed, through a dangerous-looking crowd of servants and *habitués* of the shop. He denied having pawned anything at all; and if it had been in England it is probable that he would have stuck to that while his friends prepared an alibi or bribed the witnesses who could identify him, and got off. Being in China, however, he was sent into the City and given a little thumbscrew and kneeling on chains, etc.; then he confessed that a coolie had brought him the things and asked him to pawn them, keeping half the proceeds; and as he was hard up he

had done so, and was willing to take the punishment of being concerned in the theft, though he did not know if they were stolen goods or not, nor who stole them. To this he stuck through thick and thin, though the magistrate expected that he would confess sooner or later when he found that the only alternative was being slowly tortured to death. But he hadn't been in prison a week before he escaped along with the warder over him, while the three coolies who had put me off the scent disappeared at the same time ; proof conclusive that he was a member of a powerful secret society, with partisans in the *yamen* and the gaol. He has not left a trace behind him ; and that is the result of my investigations here.

“Yours, etc.,

“FRANK PAUNCH.”

VII.

MONTHS rolled by, and the murderer was not traced, nor the guns found ; but we had of course recovered the things pawned in Shanghai. But meanwhile a great event has happened in my life ; I had met Ayesha, the soul of a great conspiracy that was to free the empire from a Tartar dynasty and the natives from a barbarian and oppressive misgovernment, and open the road for civilisation, just law, equitable taxation, and unrestricted trade. Of these conspirators I became in some sort one ; I sympathised with their aims and promised them the help of my advice and purse, though at that time I meant to go no further. At length one day I was led to inspect their secret *cache* of arms, in order to give some advice as how

best to preserve them from rust, and what sort of ammunition would be required for them. I went ; and in a vault beneath the flagged floor of a dilapidated temple, many miles from Chinkiang, on the north of the river, I was shown a heterogeneous pile of arms. There were horse-pistols, iron knives and spear-heads, navy cutlasses and sword-bayonets, muskets, flint carbines, sniders, a few Martinis, and—

“ Hallo ! A repeating-shot gun ? A Winchester ? A double-barrelled twelve-bore, by . . . by—” it was a little rusty—‘ by Westley Richards —why, man, this is mine ! ”

The old Taoist priest, with his grey locks allowed to grow all over his head, who was showing me the *cache*, came and put his hand on my shoulder.

“ It *was* yours, Mr. M——,” he said, impressively, in English ; “ but *now* it belongs to the society, to which you have devoted your life and possessions ! ”

“ Great Scott ! ” I said, looking

at him earnestly. "It is the voice of the Shen!"

He pulled off the grey locks—a wig—and stood before me with a shaven pate.

I shrank back.

"Good heavens—the murdured priest!"

He drew on another wig, right over the forehead to the eyebrows, with a small pigtail at the back; then put on the yellow spectacles, the thick nippers of which exactly hid the rim of the wig.

"The Shen!" I cried.

“Sit down,” he said, “while I tell you all about it. You are one of us now; you have acquiesced in our inevitable doctrine, that the end justifies the means. I was head of the Chinkiang branch; I had promised the council to have a certain number of guns on a given day. Their inspection was approaching, and I was still five short. My position was too dangerous to allow of buying them: I resolved to steal them. I was in-

formed of your trip in Mr. Yang's boat, not by your boy, but one of my sanpanmen spies on the foreshore, as you guessed at the time. Your boy was an inferior member of our society, it is true ; but he steadfastly refused to do anything to your hurt or loss. That is why I kidnapped him and examined him under the ordeal. I dreaded that, in his anger at seeing his master robbed, he should have betrayed me, or told you about the society, and ruined us all and our mighty project. Brave fellow ! He was faithful to us even then, even against your kindness ! Well, I was determined that there should be no miscarriage of the robbery ; I conducted it myself. It was my old trade, as I shall show you when I come to explain how it is that I, an official, have lost my queue.

“ The priest was in my way ; he might have warned you, or afterwards identified me. He was silenced, his body stowed away ; I became the priest, putting this wig, the workmanship of one of the

finest perruquiers in Hongkong, in my pocket. As the priest, I came aboard your boat and drank your wine, taking my notes the while. As soon as you were asleep we boarded you, and carried off the goods. We went ashore and walked, but only a few hundred yards ; our boat was moored behind you. It would have been impossible for us to have walked the fifteen miles to the mouth of the canal in time, even had we the strength. We had a boat worked by a hand-screw, and six sturdy boatmen to work it ; we sped down the canal at five miles an hour, in perfect silence. All the barriers were down ; the officers in charge of them had their official instructions to allow a Government boat to pass, and to deny the fact. I alone landed at Tantu and returned to Chinkiang on a pony that was waiting for me. The rest sped down the river and landed one man at the passenger station, then struck inland by the creeks on the north bank and brought the guns to this

place. The clock and watches were taken to Shanghai and at once delivered to a member of the society, who pawned them at leisure, knowing that I should allow no telegraphic communication to anticipate him. He was arrested by a fatal mischance and the pertinacity of your Shanghai detectives ; but nothing could have wrung from him any betrayal of the society, and he knew help was at hand. He was a true son of the society. Such we never leave long in the hands of our enemies : he was rescued and sent to Hongkong. And now you would like to know how I lost my pigtail. Mine has been a strange career."

This was in brief the Shen's story of his life. At the age of twenty he had had the misfortune to be caught, with a score of other pirates, ten minutes after sinking a trading junk in the Hongkong waters. With the foolish chivalry of youth, he withstood the torture with tightly closed lips, after having exhausted the asser-

tion that he was himself a prisoner of the pirates. This obstinacy, combined with the fact that he was the captain's son and a first lieutenant, caused the judge to turn a deaf ear to his offers of information when he was led out by the executioner ; he then had the presence of mind to cry out that if he was spared he would reveal where a thousand taels of pure sycea, belonging to his father, was hidden. He was strapped up in a kneeling posture like the rest and placed at the end of the line, and had the sufficiently trying ordeal of watching the slow approach of the executioner as he lopped off the bowed heads ; the man immediately next to Yoo fainted and fell forward (they do not use a block), which caused the executioner much annoyance, as his arm was getting tired. Apparently fearing a repetition of his foolishness, which required two or three hacks instead of one, a stool was brought and the assistant unwound Yoo's pigtail and held it stretched over

the stool. The sword came down ; but instead of on the nape of the neck, it descended on the pigtail a quarter of an inch from his cranium, so that he rose minus a twenty years' growth of hair, instead of a twenty years' growth of cerebral matter. Yoo looked round with a timid, deprecating smile as much as to say that he didn't mean to duck, and bent his head again ; he was, however, told, with a laugh, to get up and lead the way to the treasure. This he did satisfactorily, much to the delight of the magistrate, who had him thumbscrewed, twice a week, with many pleasant aphorisms about the goose and the golden eggs, and the reward of virtue. A common English sailor who had witnessed the execution, and uttered strange oaths when the young man was spared, chanced to be rioting up the Canton City with half a dozen drunken fellow-tars, and got up a fight with several thousand Chinamen. A runner persuaded them to follow him to

the magistrate's *yamen* for refuge : and at the moment they staggered into the court young Yoo was beseeching for a moment's rest from the torture. Jack no sooner recognised the youthful pirate, than, shouting to his comrades, he sallied in and upset the screw-drivers, threw the lad over his shoulder, and sallied out. The crowd at once changed sides, applauded, and screened the tars down to the water's edge ; and they managed to save their man. Yoo was rigged out from the slop chest, and let his hair grow over his head, but never cultivated a pigtail again.

Yoo learnt many things from that episode in his life, and kept them locked in his breast. One was that if a bribe would win a life, bribes would win an official position. Picking up English and Portuguese with remarkable skill, he joined the Macao police force, and afterwards obtained the position of a detective in the Hongkong police, where he was known as Chinaman Jack.

Here at length he had found his true sphere in life, and his skill and success astounded his chiefs. For you must know that Hongkong is a greater hotbed of desperadoes than any other city of the earth. Yoo's fortune was his face and his invisible pigtail. From a smooth, ruddy cheeked, free-limbed, boasting lad, he had come out of that ordeal with a shrivelled parchment face like that depicted in the wax effigies of the lamented genius, Mr. Peace, defunct, which enabled him to contort his features beyond recognition. His shaven head and wrinkled forehead admitted a skin covering which carried a pigtail beyond detection, for ordinary occasions, while without it he had a passport to the haunts of vice, either as an ex-convict or a Buddhist priest. He proved himself a simply invaluable coadjutor to the European police, to whom his doings were as unfathomable as to his victims ; and, I will not say how, he rapidly amassed a fortune. He then went

to Shanghai, the language of which he had picked up as he did English, and with unwearying tact purchased grade after grade until we find him here a *cheh-hsien*, or borough magistrate, with the highest reputation in the province. It goes without saying that his compeers are ignorant of the school where he learnt detection.

The feelings and motives hidden behind that inscrutable, shrivelled mask—what are they? Or is it an automaton out of which all feeling has been killed at a blow?

“And remember, Mr. M——,” concluded the Shen in a threatening voice, “you are one of us! What is done in the name of the society is done for the Great Cause!”

At this moment Ayesha entered, she for love of whom I was to commit a greater crime than this tacit acquiescence, and lose more than a gun.

A LITTLE CHINESE PARTY

A LITTLE CHINESE PARTY.

I FOUND myself in the entrance hall of a Kungkuan, or private residence ; the usual side benches (which reminded me of the Army and Navy Stores, where the footmen wait with their mistress' dogs), and the large round paper lantern with the gentleman's name in red letters. Beyond this was the courtyard, with small rockeries and handsome large blue-and-white flower-pots holding dwarf trees and flowers ; then a paved balcony with wooden pillars, and then the reception room ; light showed through the chinks of the panels, which were closed, it being winter. No one had heard the fracas of my entrance, so I went round to the side

buildings and called out, "Is any one here?" An elderly servant came out, and started on seeing a foreigner; but he felt reassured when I spoke his language. "Kindly ask your master to see me a moment," I said; "I have important business." At the same time I gave him my Chinese card, which I always take the precaution to carry, bearing my name, "Mai-i-sheng," and the occupation (of which one's apt to be a little proud, among Chinese), "Chinkiang Foreign Customs." In a short time a kindly looking gentleman came out, and saluted me silently, but with a somewhat anxious air.

"Sir," I said, "I do wrong thus to enter your house, a stranger to you. I came from Chinkiang to-day with a friend in his boat. I have been walking through the streets buying curios, and on my way back missed the road, and wandered down this street. I was attacked by some thieves opposite your noble house, and, on leaning

against the door, it fell open and I took refuge within. Since you must wish to have some proof of who I am, I beg you to look at this cheque given me by Mr. Chang on Mr. Li, a banker in this city. If it satisfies you, I will ask you to send your servant with me to some good inn, as I fear my friend will have to return to Chinkiang without me."

He looked at the cheque, and, handing it back to me, again saluted me, but this time with a beaming countenance.

"I am Mr. Li," he said ; "and if you will accept my humble hospitality to-night, it will be an honour to me. It just happens that I have some friends with me, and we shall have a pleasant dinner." Whereupon he gave some directions to his servant, and, asking to be excused for a moment to advise his friends, left me in one of the side rooms, where the servant had brought a cup of tea. I took off my over-suit, put on my smoking-cap of black

satin, took a little scent from my pocket-bottle, and wiped my face with the steaming cloth the man brought me—a most refreshing custom of the Chinese, but a dangerous conveyor, they say, of eye diseases. Then my host ushered me into the reception room; I noticed he was evidently pleased with my appearance. I was thankful for the little precautions that experience had taught me. Although I was far from home, had come a long walk, and had just undergone a rough - and - tumble struggle and a sprawl in the mud, here I was, unexpectedly introduced into a private house where three or four silk-clad gentlemen were assembled in dainty leisure, able to appear equally well dressed and clean. These will seem very vain and frivolous recollections; but they are not so. Instead of being, as Englishmen pretend to think, of no importance, personal appearance and dress is *everything* on a first introduction among Chinese, as any-

where else in the world. I recollect on previous occasions that I had come to Yangchow, with my trappings on board the houseboat, and prepared for a visit to some native gentlemen, I had gone in my shooting clothes and boots, old, clumsy, and begrimed; and coming into company with a dozen gentleman in their nice new silks, spotless stockings, and clean hands, had at once felt myself at a disadvantage, and therefore ill at ease and borish.

The reception room was a large, sombre place, its black and white unrelieved by any hangings or colour other than the pale-tinted scrolls of the seasons. The floor was black tile, and the walls, mostly consisting of dark trellised wood-work, covered with paper; the blank spaces were whitewashed. Opposite the door was a large table, on which stood an old English clock, three quarters of an hour wrong, a pair of large vases, and candlesticks. On either side was the uncomfortable row of straightbacked wooden chairs

with teapoys between each two. In one corner was the only sign of comfort, the opium divan, covered with red cloth, standing on a raised dais ; a flat wooden bed, with big bolsters for the head, and the opium-tray, with its night-light, in the middle. There were two iron trays standing on tripods, containing a "fire" of smouldering charcoal-dust balls, raised pyramidically. From the black-raftered ceiling hung half a dozen large square lanterns of glass, with the usual flowers painted on the glass and beaded tassels hanging from the four corners ; but the room was lighted by two foreign hanging lamps. The only life to this dull and formal frame was in the centre of the room, where stood a square table on which were small piles of dollars and long ivory "cards" ; by the side of each chair was a small table holding more cards in a dice-box, a candlestick, and a water-pipe. My host's three guests pushed their chairs back as I entered and stood up. I exchanged a silent

salute of raised folded hands to each, and then sat down to the cup of tea that was brought round. My host sat on the other side of the little table between us ; the other guests sat opposite at a distance of a dozen feet.

Nothing can be conceived more uncomfortable than a Chinese drawing-room. The only excuse for the cold monotony of the furniture is that it acts as a splendid contrast to the padded brilliance of their attire. But the check to cordiality is in the arrangement of chairs. One always feels inclined to pull it round so that you can more or less face the man next to you ; but they are not so easily shifted, being hemmed in by a chair or a table on either side. And then fancy talking with a man sitting bolt upright about half a mile opposite !

There were plenty of subjects of conversation, and I found these men very well informed on current topics. There had been a piracy on the Namoa, near Hongkong,

which introduced interesting and sensible views on the methods of justice of the two countries ; and though you don't flatter a Chinaman as a rule when you praise his laws, I mention my conviction that the summary execution on ill-substantial suspicion is perhaps the most practical way of suppressing piracy, since the fact of any connection with lawlessness may condemn a man ; he is not to get off scot-free by a mere alibi. They returned the compliment by praise of the astonishing painstaking and leniency of our judges, which was a proof that at home we must be marvellously "reasonable" people ; but they owned it was somewhat out of place with unscrupulous ruffians. But what was still a matter of first-hand and exciting news was the burning of the ss. *Shanghai*, on Christmas Day, when three or four hundred Chinese passengers had been burnt to death, though the vessel was run into the river bank, and there were numerous boats about. A salt official of Yang-

chow, newly appointed to the HSien-ship of Ichang, was among the dead ; he was among my host's intimate acquaintances. "He would not have lived long, anyhow," was his callous comment, "for he was eaten up with disease."

Meanwhile servants had removed the card-table and replaced it with a round one, on which little dishes began to appear, and silver-tipped oblong chopsticks, with dainty little silver forks, were laid out. Oh, that they would take to a tablecloth ! I must say a meal loses half its charm without it ; and yet it would scarcely be suitable for a Chinese dinner-table, on which drops of gravy and bits of food are continually spilt.

Talk of the restaurants and amusements of Shanghai, which some of these gentlemen had visited and found a very dream of indulgence (and expense), suggested something to my host. "Ah," he cried, "but we must have the little ladies !—eh, shall we ?" To which I replied that I had heard the fame of the damsels

of Yangchow, and should like to see them, if they would not be afraid of a foreigner. He immediately wrote the names of four on slips of paper, and sent his servant off with the order. This seems to be the only idea of female society they have : hired pup-pets, to waddle in on their little feet, pull things about, light an opium pipe, and play off their little coquet-ries ; sing a song and twang a guitar, and waddle off again. There is noth-ing naughty in all this, and it is often slow enough, for which they are paid a regular price per head (\$2 hire), like any other performer. It must not be supposed, however, that woman is not woman because her feet are stumps and she is a round ball of wadded clothes, with her complexion smothered in paint and her hair stiffened with oils. There are cour-tesans who can read man like their sisters, and gain the ascendancy over the fancies even of a selfish and *blasé* Chinaman. They receive gifts of the most costly robes and orna-ments, and perhaps not unfrequently

guide the counsels of high officials. But at first sight they strike a foreigner as a most wearisome puppet-show.

In they trooped, one after the other, with little screams of delight, and ran at our host or stood demurely near the door with their attendants. They were dressed magnificently, in silks of blue and pink and green, with varied borders ; and highly ornamented caps, and shoes, and trousers. One was a tall, stately girl, with features as regular as an English beauty, who was evidently an old friend of the host ; two were stupid and shy ; allotted to me, for her saucy way of meeting my inquiries, was one named Kuei-hsiang. She certainly was a charming little coquette, and evidently a favourite with all ; and I won her favour by an absence of *empressement* or surprise. No one would imagine that they would believe in a glance of admiration, these poor little toys paid by the hour, and blunted by the coarse compliments of men whose

pride it is to be sceptically callous, and too selfish to bestow any delicacy of attention on one who is paid to amuse them. But I think her woman's nature reasserted itself when brought into contact with a person of totally different ideas ; I daresay I flattered her.

At length the centre dish was borne, smoking, in, and our host invited us to sit down, the damsels sitting slightly behind us. I had an excellent appetite after all my exercise and excitement, and feeling absolutely "irresponsible," was prepared to enjoy myself. While the others dallied with shark's fins or the intermediary melon seed, I furtively attacked cold duck, cold chicken, and ham, to get a solid foundation for the main dishes, which seemed to evaporate in my palate. I was fairly successful with the sticks, except for a certain delightful dish of what seemed like snails : they were so soft that they fell in half just as I had got hold of them. As our ardour slackened off with satiety, we

attacked the wine, which was contained in lead kettles in an outer kettle of hot water ; the porcelain wine-cups likewise resting in a hot-water frame. It was a light, exhilarating sort of sherry, and went excellently well with the style of food. We had now been two hours or more over the feast, and I had honestly out-drunk every man at the table. Then my host rallied, and said we would have the final test cup. My little mentor pulled my sleeve and implored me not to take any more ; and when the servants brought the large cups, treble the ordinary capacity, she took it up with the intention of drinking it herself. But as every one cried out that it was not fair, I was obliged to drain it off, and turned it in triumph bottom upwards. The others struggled with it, gurgled, and laid it down. I immediately felt the effects : things danced before my eyes, and the room spun slowly round. I clasped her little hand and held it tight for a minute while I struggled

to get hold of my escaped senses. Things gradually resumed their normal stability, though they seemed to be somewhat duplicated ; and when I had tackled the closing bowl of rice the dizziness had passed off. Now we pushed our chairs out and, unobserved, I got one of my cigars into my mouth and was happy. A good cigar is better after a Chinese dinner than any other, in my mind ; and not to have one is to take off half the pleasure of the feast. Yüeh-hsien, our host's favourite, was now going through a little sort of dance with melancholy grace ; it consists of bends and undulations of the body, and languid wavings of the hands, all on the same spot, except for a step backwards now and then. When she finished I gave her, out of compliment to Mr. Li, a little chalcedony ornament that I had picked up in the curio shops during the afternoon, which she received with dignified condescension. The other girls rushed at her, seized it, and passed it round from one to the

other with cries of admiration—except Kuei-hsiang. This interesting maiden darted at me a pretty glance of anger, pouted, and refused to look at it. We then had an ear-splitting song or two from the other two, to which, to show my acquaintance with etiquette, I paid no attention, but puffed lazily at my cigar. When they pressed my little companion to perform, she refused pettishly, saying, "I don't want any of the foreigner's presents! Yüeh-hsien can sing again if she likes." Our host frowned (which was equivalent to a command); she only pouted the more. I got possession of her little hand, and joined in their entreaties. She pretended not to hear; then, rippling into a coquettish smile, with a sparkling glance from her dancing brown eyes, she whipped my handkerchief from my pocket, and commenced a dainty dance on tip-toe, swaying her body backwards and forwards, bowing backwards beneath the handkerchief held over her head

with two hands, sinking slowly down, then leaping forward and standing still, in attitude. Every one applauded, while her eye-play during the *pas* captivated me quite : dimpled and rippling smiles and glances, then long lashes shyly to the ground, then uplifted devotionally, and then a sidelong look of demure mock-modesty. And now, accompanied by a lesser star on the *pi-pa*, she broke into a song that quite astonished me : a plaintive little melody, that suddenly leapt from grave to gay as the second guitar struck in. Every now and then she broke off and swayed her body on one foot and the other to the twang of the strings ; and again, as the song seemed dying away, the other voices would pick up the refrain. At length she undulated forward and, with a low obeisance, presented me my handkerchief with both hands ; then sank slightly panting into her chair. Then I gave her the watch, which, alas, poor girl ! was to be her ruin.

I suppose now a word at least of apology is expected for these flagrant departures from orthodox views. To enjoy a Chinese dinner ! To admire a Chinese melody ! And finally to fall in love with a Chinese sing-song girl ! It is awful ! No ; I 'm not even going to say that I have a hankering after strange dishes, that I was (in those days) a sentimental youth who fell in love with every pretty face he saw, and that the wine had got into my head ; but out of mere contrariety will uphold that a good Chinese dinner is the most *récherché* thing in the world, that a Chinese gentleman is the most perfect and polished host that you could wish for, that a small foot is no more deformity than a high heel, that the absence of stays does not necessarily take away from a woman's grace, that a loose sack gives as much play to the fancy as a tight-laced bodice, that a coquette is a coquette all the world over (which means she 's the most charming play-

thing that was ever created), and that a Chinese song—no ; I will draw the line at a Chinese song. The one I heard must be indulgently put down as exceptional.

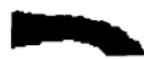
At length the *amahs* came for their babes, they donned yet a twenty-first coat, and, after an oft-practised coquettishness of partings, left ; but Kuei-hsiang ran back and whispered to our host. He whispered to the others : they whispered to each other ; and I whispered, only loudly, “Certainly ! the night is young.” So shortly after we too went out. I wisely abstained from the finishing cup of Kaoliang that they took to clear their brains ; in my experience the art of mixing is in leaving well alone. We wandered a little way down the street, and entered a neighbouring house, where a young fellow of wealth and *blase* appearance had managed to see several of his guests under the table ; and, after a chat and a smoke, issued forth again with him and those of his guests

who had legs under them, until we reached a little door, where we were evidently expected. What a babel and brilliant confusion there was in that diminutive room, with its bright foreign wall-paper and cheap hanging lamp ! The little *mousnises*, balls of bright silks, running about on their stumps and clutching hold of their particular friends, who remained calm and unamused as ever ; the old keepers of the house stumping about with tea and pipes ; the elder men quietly sitting down and paternally pinching the maiden on their knee who filled and lighted the pipe ; the younger *men* languidly reclining on opium beds and wearily taking a whiff, *blasé*, as well they might be, to the dreary coquettices that custom and payment have rendered devoid of all semblance of sentiment, whose badinage consists in nothing more playful than unpleasant puns.

A little hand pulled me by the sleeve ; a sparkling eye and cherry lips allured me hardly noticed through the crowd, until I found my-

self reclining back on the bed at the far end of the room in the shade of its curtains. What with fatigue, excitement, satiety, and wine, and the fumes from the pipe that my host was smoking on the other side of the tray, I was in a sleepy, voluptuous state of vagueness and imbecility ; I had but a dim consciousness of colours flitting to and fro, men's forms moving round as in a stately dance, and was of course utterly incapable of active volition. In other words, as soon as my head touched a pillow—I must apologise, and own I found myself to be inebriated. I was not aware of Mr. Li giving up his place to Kuei-hsiang, and his surprised-confidential “she likes you !” struck on my ears like a voice in a dream. Nor did I realise the gradual thinning of the room, the little *mousnîs* mounting the dais to have a peep at the foreigner, the voice of Kuei-hsiang commanding them to be off. I puffed mechanically at the twelve-bore ivory mouthpiece that was put against my lips, sucking in

with nostrils and throat the insidious, pleasant poison. If for a moment I dreamily lifted my heavy eyelids, it was to see and faintly smile to a dark and tender glance, and a rosy mouth, and a white, rounded arm from a gloom of silken sleeves. The syrup singes over the little lamp ; the shadows softly close around ; a little hand emerges to mould it in the needle, and disappears ; the heavy fumes, laden with subtle, mysterious odour, slowly spread themselves overhead into a canopy of blackness, out of whose clouds vast forms of ominous genii grin down. The needle's end splutters : the glow-worm light gets paler and paler ; then flickers, and goes out. . . .



THE GENERAL



THE GENERAL.

I WAS reading some Embassy reminiscences of Constantinople in, I think, *Temple Bar*, when I came across a delicious anecdote of the French Minister shocking the English ambassador with a naughty *apropos*. This little scene struck me at once ; it was my friend the General and the objectionable English Consul brought before my recollection again to the life. The General (so we called him, for he had held a command in the war between North and South, and we were afraid of putting it too low ; he having been on the wrong side we could not authenticate it in the official victorious list : “I, sir, was a rebel !”)—the General had much of the French

characteristic in him ; much of the *insouciance*, the *bonhomie*, the *chevalier*, that so marks the south in all climes. He was a Virginian ; and a living type he was of all that has been handed down to us of most lovable, most gay, most generous, most courteous and chivalrous of that race of America's nobility, the slave-holding country gentleman.

But with it he inherited in happy obviousness that entirely national characteristic that marks the American everywhere in complete distinction from an *English* gentleman—brag. And let me not be thought to uphold one grain of superiority to the Englishman for his lack of it. It is simply a national habit ; as a personal characteristic the loudest American is simplicity and unaffectedness by the side of many a correct English gentleman's suppressed bumpitiousness and conceit. It is a splendid habit ; it is honest. For an English gentleman it is, by centuries of education, impossible ; and it often affords the most delightful

amusement to observe the agonised expression of disdaining to resort to such vulgarities on the face of the latter when he is being made to look small, talked down, and sat upon, by his colleague's grandiose, shameless, unaffected brag. To prevent a misconception of my meaning by the term, I will give an instance ; in this case it was "bluff." There had been a riot ; consulates' and citizens' houses had been looted and burnt by a Chinese mob. The native authorities very rightly, and as usual, disputed the compensation claims item by item, and in the whole, with the usual subterfuges and cunctations. It was a British concession ; there was only one American firm. The British Consulate, a fine, big, new building, had been burnt to the ground with everything in it ; the American Consulate, a diminutive, hired house, had only been very imperceptibly looted. But the missionaries, who had suffered considerably, were mostly American. In any case, the American claim was no trifle.

The British claims were subjected to the humiliation of a personal official interrogation of each individual claimant by a Chinese interpreter (the same, I believe, whom the British Consul-General in Shanghai refused to meet three years afterwards for being an embezzling defaulter from Hongkong) acting on behalf of the native Governor-General, with Her Majesty's British Consul sitting by without remonstrance while British merchants were asked sarcastically what they meant in describing themselves as gentlemen. The British claims, I say, were insultingly filtered through this court and postponed and postponed. The American claims were paid promptly and without demur. What was this due to, that England, whose Government-built Consulate was burnt, and bayonet-won Concession derisively given over to a three days' loot, should be humiliated and put off like a little tributary country, while America, who had no interests in the place, and has never shown a bayonet or a

fightable war-vessel on its coast, should be served with respectful, unquestioning promptness? Bluff, and the absence of it in our delicately educated representatives. The General refused to allow his nationals' claims to be overhauled by the Chinese authorities. He, the American Consul, had overhauled them, cut them down, and guaranteed them. The fact that he, the representative of the United States, handed them in, was sufficient guarantee and proof of their reasonableness and truth. There was his claim, in one total; they would question it, or refuse it, at their peril. "You, sir, are the Tao-tai; I," with his outstretched arm brought on to his breast, and eagle head thrown back—"I—am the American Consul!" The British Consul, who was present at the interview, himself described it to us, ridiculing it. The impressive way of standing martially up, the piercing fixed eye under blackly bent eyebrows, the long pause of silent, unwavering, frowning regard, till the

poor Tao-tai shook in his boots and expected a revolver about to be drawn at his head, then the arm slowly outstretched, and the pompous, solemn, meaningless adjuration: "You, sir, are the Tao-tai!" All this he had witnessed with contempt, utterly unable to imitate it; and it was this bit of bluff that upheld America's honour while we sat by helplessly because we could not deign to threaten where we had no distinct orders from home, and did not intend to carry out our threats. Very proper and conscientious is this honesty of non-self-assertion, but utterly misplaced. The General had just as much modesty as his colleague, but he was a diplomatist. He knew the right way of dealing with Asiatics. He knew that what was required was bluff. He gave them bluff, with the perfection and advantage of its being a national practice.

It was always the same on every occasion of dealings with the natives. The General always got his way at once; always made everything go



to the glory of the United States, while England was despised. Merchants and road secretaries watched for the opportunity when their own Consul ran down to Shanghai for a week and left his business to his colleague. There was a rush made at once: a hundred petty affairs that required the assent, or interference, of the local authorities, and had been dragging on for months simply from the native practice of refusing and postponing everything that is not firmly insisted on—in other words, everything presented by the feeble British Consul—were put through in a day. He made a splendid Consul, did the General; with no other resources than the rumour of an antiquated, two-knot, paddle-wheel gunboat, he filled the native mind with the utmost respect and admiration for his country's prestige, while England, with its fleet of continually passing modern war-vessels and enormous preponderance of trade, saw its prestige dwindled away and become an ob-

feet of influence, simply for want of bluff.

Bluff is the power of using prestige. It is one of the highest branches of diplomacy—Palmerstonian diplomacy. Prestige itself is nothing else. When you have knocked a man down once it is an easy thing to lift your fist and threaten to do it again: you have only got to look as strong-armed as you were when you did it. We look much stronger, and we threaten, only we forget to raise our fist: we haven't the simple pluck for that. When you have never knocked a man down it is still possible to look so formidable as to make your opponent think you strong—a much more difficult task of bluff, and this the American Consul does without any show of strength at all. And yet bluff is not so easy as to be despised on that account. Bluff requires a deal of tact, especially of the latter description: it is in fact, not too easy, but too difficult, for the average British Consul. The General combined the most exquisite tact with his bluff.

In short, where the American diplomatist has the lead of us, with Asiatics, is in not being tied down by antiquated legends of respectability. It may not be the thing in European courts—one may recollect the conduct of the United States representative at Constantinople and the "Bulgarian Atrocities"—but it is the right thing at Peking. Instead of a verbose, drawing-room, polite and courteous Foreign Office legend minister, we want a seven-foot, roman-nosed, lantern-jawed colonel, who *looks* iron and thunder without a word. Now I give that description, Colonel, with the highest respect, but you're not a man to require mealy-mouthed epithets, so I have used the word that gives the impression pithily. A Chinese diplomatist is beginning to find in Englishmen the very type that he is used to, without the subtlety; so he knows his game and wins. But in United States representatives he has to deal with harder stuff that terrifies him. He is expending his wiles on

an iron-jawed horse, and gives up at once. The Americans have become Palmerstons and we Chinese.

The General was the soul of honour and courtesy ; that is the more reason why I should finish off his Americanisms before I describe his ordinary self. He loved to use that bluffing "fixing with the eye" at the club bar. He had a watery eye now, and a hand that shook, but the thundering frown that the fine eyebrows could assume, the fiery expansion of the small, delicate nostrils, the martial tendency of the white moustache, and the impregnable firmness of the small, tufted chin, gave him so inexorable and ferocious an air that you succumbed inevitably before the eagle glance and commanding arm, and were "fixed with the power of his eye." Not once or twice have I seen half a dozen of us at eight o'clock, when a game of pyramids had dragged out and we were late for dinner or engagements, and on the point of rushing off, arrested by the outstretched arm and the

"Hold on, gentlemen ; hold on !" of the General, who was spinning a yarn. Impervious to the impatience of his audience, he would, with the utmost relish, roll out the description, for the eighth time, of his yearly trip to Japan, and the princesses, "lithe, young, svelte," that had stooped to untie his boots. "A dream, sir, a dream ! Ten thousand coloured lanterns hung round the shores, and escorted by the Prince of Kamagoochi in his own private yacht ! When I retired to my chamber that night, sir, in the palace, I heard a sound behind me. I turned ; it was Yuchisdma. 'Princess,' I exclaimed" (breaking into one of his charming smiles)—"'Princess, what is the meaning of this ?' She sank on one knee and kissed my hand ; lithe, sir, young, svelte, like a beautiful willow bending its weeping tresses over the babble of a shady brook !"

The General had a charming poetic fancy, and endowed his adventures with the glamour of fairy

tales ; and then, utterly regardless of his hearer's appreciation, devolved them in rounded periods for his own practice and amusement. But it was wonderful how he would keep us there against our wills, not interested, not listening, for we had heard it before, impatient, for we were hungry and dinner was getting cold, while he perfected his manner of recounting on our *corpus-viles*.

But do not think that because we did not listen that his anecdotes were flat. The General was a poet ; his stories and descriptions were too good for the casual crowd at the club bar. *Those* hearers would cry out on him for inventing, for exaggerating. Why, who wants bald facts ? the very province of the artist is embellishing, idealising. The General was an artist, the General was a poet.

As a matter of fact he had little need for inventing his experiences of Japan. He had been Consul there for some years, and so genial, sunny, chivalrous, poetic a soul could

not fail to be idolised amongst the most sunny, the most chivalrous, the most poetic nation in the world. The General had friends among the native grandees in a friendship that would be accorded to but few white men ; he was popular with the common people wherever he went. He was popular even with the Chinese officials, utterly lacking in sun and chivalry. They admired and respected a man who could be so firm and peremptory when he wanted anything, so genial and *bon-garçon* when the business was off. He never deigned to learn the native language, and here he had a great advantage over his British colleagues. The British Consul invariably tries to converse with the native officials in their own language, and consequently makes an egregious ass of himself ; for the conversational language is full of stumbling-blocks and Eastern idioms that require years of daily practice to pick up, and Europeans never get any practice in conversation. They converse, it is true, with

their servants and teachers, but these turn their idioms into an English garb to make them intelligible. Perhaps he may pick up the coolie talk correctly, as far as it goes. A Chinese gentleman has the deepest pride in the intricacies and periphrases of his own language, and a quick sense of the ridiculous ; and continually, as I know from unwitting avowals, the grave and polished official, who listens so seriously to his English visitor's efforts, is ridiculing him in his sleeve the while. Only one or two Englishmen in the whole of China are able to converse idiomatically without a deal of concentration on the words their lips are shaping, and in most interviews the Consul has to think more of the substance than manner of his talk. I have heard two officials, immediately after the visit of a consul who is supposed to be particularly good in the spoken language, chuckling consumedly, though not without ill-nature, over some expressions that he had used in sublime

unconsciousness of their *double-entendre*. The General, on the contrary, addressed them in what he knew best, his own language, and then turned to his interpreter. There was little need for interpretation ; the General's manner, his smile or his frown, spoke his meaning more intelligibly than words.

And when he *did* wish to be disagreeable he was very national. The General hated Shirt—as we all did. But unfortunately Shirt was left in charge, and the General wanted certain yellow books and statistics. The General had that supreme art of a head of department of laying every one under contribution. There is often an outcry on the part of those used—there was of Sir Richard Temple in India ; people say it is a very easy way of earning fame to sit still and make your underlings work like slaves, and then get *kudos* for enormous energy. Such a spiteful and curious criticism scarcely requires confuting. It is nothing to do a thing yourself ; it

is everything to get things done. That is all that is required of a head of department, the tact and spirit of command requisite to keep the staff up to its work. The General had this tact, this spirit of command, in a wonderful degree. He had no staff, so he made his friends, and even his enemies, abandon their own work, and become his staff *pro tem.* You might be busy, you might be lazy, you might dislike extremely doing a thing for neither pay nor thanks—in other words, being made a convenience of. You might have made up your mind with the strongest oaths never so to be pressed into service again. But it was simply breath thrown away ; it was not of the slightest avail. The General had the spirit of command. He came in and fixed you with the power of his eye, then he laid down his paper and said, in a voice that brooked not the possibility of refusal, “Mr. Jones, you will greatly oblige me by going over this report and filling in the requisite figures. I



am in no hurry for it, to-morrow will do."

You rush after him as he leaves it in your hands. "But, my dear General, I really have no time—"

"Sir, I repeat I am in no immediate hurry."

"But—but what is it? What do you want done? What is it about?" you cry in despair.

"Mr. Jones, you will greatly oblige me by reading it; reading it through, my dear sir, and seeing what it means. *I* don't know what it is about; *I* know nothing of statistics. I receive instructions from my Government to send in a report on worms, and I come at once to you. I could n't leave it in better hands. There is no immediate hurry, to-morrow will do. *Good-morning!*"

You lay it fiercely aside, and swear to have nothing to do with it; time goes on, and you know you will have to meet the General's eagle frown and inexorable chin; with a groan of despair you lay

your work aside and take up your new task. It is the spirit of command.

But the General never stooped to sue. He could only order, even to open rebels. The General wanted something of Shirt, with whom he was at open war—wives and mutual antipathy. It must be carried off with bluff. On Monday morning, as Shirt was buried in a pile of confiscation petitions, over which he made tremendous self-important to-do and got confused and mixed into the condition of a pea on a hot shovel, the door was flung wide open and the *tingchai* announced, in an awed confidential voice, “The Amellican Consul !”

Slowly and portentously the General stalked in, with his straw wideawake tilted over his eyes, and his cheroot, which he held in a manner ferocious and peculiar to himself in the underlip, tilted up towards the brim of his hat, and his walking-stick firmly on the ground.

"Good-morning, General," said Shirt, not looking up, partly because he was in a muddle, and partly because he wanted to preserve his dignity by restraining his usual impulse to cringe before the spirit of command. "Good-morning, General," he said.

But there was no reply. The General, with his hat on, and his cheroot in his underlip, and his stick on the ground, was fixing him with the power of his eye. Shirt could not sit still under it; he writhed, struggled to resist, and then gave in; he pushed his chair back and danced, bowing and scraping, towards his visitor, who stood so truculently on the threshold.

"Well, General, what can I do for you this morning? You must excuse me not getting up when you came in, but really I am so frightfully busy——"

The General was eyeing him utterly unrelaxed in commanding ferocity. Then he suddenly unbent, took his cheroot from his

mouth, expanded into his charming smile, extended his hand, and said, "Good-morning, Mr. Shirt!"

The revulsion was too much: Shirt was vanquished. The General immediately resumed his truculent air, and fixed the cheroot in the side of his mouth, and said sternly, "Mr. Shirt, I require some information on worms. I shall be obliged by receiving from you any publications or statistics you possess on the subject. You can send them up to me in the course of the morning." And without deigning further comment, he portentously left.

Shirt danced round in the utmost distress. "Really, it is too bad! It is insulting! It is unheard of, coming into my office with his hat on and a cigar in his mouth! I *won't* do it! I *won't* look up his beastly statistics! Let him come and find them himself if he wants them. We are not allowed to send documents out of the office. I shall write and tell him. I shall write and——"

Of course he gave in. The General had given his orders. He did not wait for refusals. They were obeyed. Shirt threw up his morning's work to hunt up the old archives, and when he had got into an inextricable muddle and taken off his coat and attachable cuffs and turned the whole office topsy-turvy, handed it over to me (I was his secretary at the time).

I pondered over the General's rudeness. I concluded it was a set-off to his own conscience for asking anything, even in that way, of a man he openly despised. It may have been American bluff, but at the same time the end justified the means. He got what he wanted. It was diplomacy ; it was tact. It showed a profound knowledge of the man he was dealing with. That whole report was written by me and the doctor, and the data were supplied by all the high local magnates placed under energetic contribution, and the yellow books. It was copied in a flowing hand by his clerk,

and then the great signature was attached, and we were rewarded with a critical and not unqualified approval, and a drink over the bar, for which, by the by, I paid. This was genius ; this was the genius of command. The General knew nothing of his subject, so he put to the wheel those who did. We did n't dare to scamp our work—for him.

Of course there is a trifle of playful exaggeration in this. It was a pleasure to take pains for so genial and charming a friend. The General was for ever repaying a trifling help with presents and kind services. Such geniality is alone diplomacy, natural as it flows from him. It goes to increase the staff. A diplomatist should for ever be enlarging his staff.

And he was a very flood of sunlight where there was gloom. I remember one Sunday morning when I had gone round to look up misanthropical Jones. He was in a particularly bad humour this morning, and sitting on the ground

sail-making—not dressed. He had not got a word for me, and only talked to his dogs every now and then, when he kicked them off the sail. The General came in, bright and fresh and sunny as usual, with his pink face and snowy linen and light tweed suit in the height of summer, searching for the Sunday *zacouska* and looked around.

“Good-morning, Mr. Jones!” He always “mistered” his nearest friends.

Jones growled without turning round.

“What is the matter with our friend?” he asked of me.

“Oh, don’t ask me. Some idiotic fancied indigestion, I suppose, or the system gone wrong.”

Jones took no notice, but went on stitching, bare-footed and unkempt. We ignored his presence and talked; and then the General got up, and I too.

“Sit down,” he whispered, gently pushing me back into my chair; “wait a minute.”

“ Well, good-bye, Mr. Jones,” going up and shaking hands with him, with a twinkling eye. Then he left, and I heard him holding a whispered colloquy with the boy ; and the heavy bang of the lid of the ice-box outside. Then, when Jones thought he had gone, he burst into the room again like a schoolboy, waving a bottle of champagne over his head. “ Hurrah, hurrah, Mr. Jones ! A find ! I was going downstairs quite sad at seeing you so melancholy, when the lid of your ice-chest lifted of its own accord, and out popped this bottle of Monopole. ‘ Take me to my master,’ it whispered ; ‘ take me and lay me before him and make him drink ; for he must laugh, or he will die ! ’ I took upon myself the inspired mission : I lay it before you. What are you going to do with it ? Laugh or die ? ”

Jones could not resist this ; he laughed, opened it, and we were as merry as could be. Strange concomitant of the mission : the boy

followed close on the General's heels with three glasses, some cut bread-and-butter, and a tin of anchovy paste and a lump of Russian caviare that the General had brought in his pocket. "That, sir, has just arrived from Vladivostock, and was given me by the captain of the *Sivoutch!*" It may have been so, or it may have come from the Russians at Hankow; but it was another trait of the General's poetic fancy. Every liqueur, every wine, every appetiser on his table, came direct from the place of production —the gift of the Prince. Why not?

Glorious company the General could be over those Sunday morning *zacouskas*. *Zacouska* was his own name: it was invented to surround the caviare.

And with all his *bon-garçon camaraderie* the General was a homely man and a doting father. He was a playmate to his little daughter, ate bread and milk for supper, and retired early to bed.

He took a glass of milk in the morning, and the milk was brown.

Such was the American Consul.

The **OBJECTIONABLE ENGLISH CONSUL**, on the other hand, was a very opposite character.

OFFICE MEN

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OFFICE MEN.

Q., THE COLD PRECISE.

Q. was a cold, sarcastic sort of man, I own, but for my part I liked him. He was a splendid office man. Some elder assistants hated him ; they were those fashionable clerks who consider that they are paid to smoke a cigar, read the paper, dangle their legs from the table corner, and obstruct the work—a way of hiding their ignorance. They thought they ought to be on familiar terms with the Commissioner, drop the mister, and take a seat and smoke in his office. X. was one of these in some respects. He was a simple-minded, good-natured little English gentleman, hospitable, garrulous, and marredly homely, weak-minded,

nervous, indecisive, full of rooted prejudices on propriety, with a conversational disposition to naughty laxity and wide tolerance. "I'm not the thort of chap to thet the Thames on fire, you know, but thill I do my best," was his humble comment. But, for all that, he had a very touchy idea on the goodness of his "best," and used to feel very sore when a junior ventured to make a suggestion to him. He was sufficiently diffident and unassertive to obey such suggestions with a little laugh into his puffy moustache and a "Well, you know, I, weally, I 've been such a long time in the service that I 'm beginning to forget these trifles, don't you know" ; but, for all that, he would go home to his wife and sooner or later come out with it, how the youngsters seemed to have lost all reverence for their seniors. He might bottle it up for a week, but it would rankle till he had had a good grumble. Then he would forgive them.

When Q. came, X. would go into his office at ten to have a chat. For

the first few mornings he tried to keep up his dignity before me, a junior, by giving the impression that he held mighty confabulations with the chief on matters of state. Then he began to show symptoms of bridling dignity. "Peculiar man, Q.," he would say, with a funny little smile. "He does n't mean anything, of course—it 's only his way; still, I must say his manner is peculiar."

"What, rather cold, you mean?" I said, offhandedly, divining the smart of small but wounded dignity behind that little laugh.

"Yes, that 's what it is," he said, warming to his grievance; "cold—that 's the very word. Of course it 's only his way, you know; but then, you know, when a man has been some twelve or fourteen years in the service as I have, he expects to be treated with a little more consideration, don't you know."

"Awful cold man," I said, pretending to be busy with my work so as to hide my amusement. "And does n't like smoke, too, I believe?"

"No," with the self-conscious little laugh ; "that is just one of the points where his behaviour was, to say the least, a little peculiar. I've always been accustomed, don't you know, to stroll in and have a chat with the Commissioner, and I generally take my cigar with me." (Cool, I thought.) "Well, Q. said to me this morning—in fact, gave me to understand that he did n't like smoke. And then, you know, he does n't ask a fellow to sit down ; in fact, he seems as though he did n't want to see a fellow. Of course I have got nothing particular to say ; but when a fellow's been some twelve or fourteen years in the service, he naturally expects to be consulted a little, don't you know, and shown the despatches, don't you know, and that sort of thing."

And so the murder was out. I could imagine Q.'s manner. Writing a letter when X. knocks and comes hesitatingly in, with his moustache-muffled little "good-morning." Q. frowns and does not look up for some time, while X. fidgets about, blows

the smoke through his moustache, and looks through the window. Then Q. lifts his fever-yellowed face with an air of cool annoyance that spreads for a moment into a miserable, sarcastic smile, eyeing his visitor with the look of surprise that asks, "What the devil do you want?" and says—

"Is Mrs. X. quite well this morning, and the baby?"

"Oh, yeth, thankth, which reminds me that the wife was saying to me this morning that you might feel a bit lonely perhaps on just arriving, and if you cared to come round to a quiet little dinner to-night—pot-luck, you know—"

Faint blush and sarcastic smile on part of Q., who replies—

"Thanks, I am used to my own company. I am afraid I must ask you to excuse me. Have you any news this morning?" ("Because, if you haven't, the sooner you leave the better I shall be pleased"—unspoken.)

"No; I only just looked in to see

if there was any news from Peking, or anything?"

"Many thanks. Should there be any circulars relating to the business of your office, I will send them in in the course of the morning. Is there anything else?"

And Q. goes on with his letters, with a slight frown of annoyance, then looks up to say—

"I observe that you smoke in the morning, Mr. X. I should feel it a favour if you would leave your cigar outside when business brings you into my office, as I detest smoke."

Exit X., confused, and preparing to puff and strut the moment he gets on the other side of the door, eyed out with cold surprise and melancholy sarcasm by Q.

Q. was the same to everybody in the office. He nearly always wore an air of being annoyed at the interruption, but, at the same time, he always attended carefully to the subject brought before him, although he never lost an opportunity of mild sarcasm of the wet-blanket-on-youth-

ful-enthusiasm sort, and generally managed to find a mistake in the statement of fact. But all this was merely his way, idiosyncratic of the confirmed old bachelor sceptic, partly based on twenty odd years of experience in managing staffs of young men inclined to carry the familiarity of society into the office, subverting the brief command-and-obey with which self-sufficient men of reflection prefer to conduct the work. Q. was a commissioner of near the longest standing in the service, and young assistants, disappointed at his melancholy reception of some suggestion to them new and striking, would come across some old reports written twenty years before, in which Q. had exhaustively worked up and out this very same subject.

Then, too, rumour said that Q. had been drawing five hundred taels a month for all these years and had never spent a farthing, and so must be immensely rich. His reputed wealth was borne out by the fact that he was superficially stingy and

ascetic. As a matter of fact, Q. entertained at least as much and as expensively as other commissioners, and spent liberally on anything that deserved expense ; but being a sceptic, freed from cant and show, he had reduced his life to a system of common-sense economy that created envy in poor married assistants who, from mere vanity and want of self-control, spent twice as much on half the pay. That is to say, Q., knowing the value of health and the insipidity of chance companionship, and having long since analysed the vanity of ordinary so-called pleasures, neither smoked, nor drank, nor frequented the club. Smoke he didn't like, and between-meal drinks disagreed with his liver. Companionship he enjoyed occasionally of his own choosing, but solitude had more charms than the fortuitous gathering over the club bar. He didn't keep more servants than he actually wanted, and he did not give them twelve dollars when they would work better on eight. He

knew the value of things, and preferred buying in the cheapest market, and he preferred a cheaper article to a more expensive one when it would serve the purpose equally well. Finally, he did not see why he should retire when he preferred work to *ennui*, and China to England. Why should he throw up enjoyment and income together? If he were paid to retire and charged to remain, doubtless he would elect to remain. It was these very common-sense principles that earned for him the accusation of stinginess from men who envied his economy because they could not emulate it, and abused his sticking to the service because they wished to step into his shoes.

Q. was, in fact, a confirmed, selfish old bachelor, desiccated of all the blood and water that makes a vibrating life, but which at the same time is the source of innumerable excesses and humours. Freed thus of the causes of unreliability, he had become one of those exact, methodical

minds that work for ever with the greatest precision and regularity—one of those bachelors who have known every phase and evil in life, suspect everything, provide against everything, and have remedies against most of its ills. Life is to them an old game. They know all its moves—they have played it so long ! Like whist, they tire not of it ; they still feel a half-ironical pleasure in playing their cards according to time-learnt, farseeing rules, and watching the mistakes of others. Only, they have lost its zest. All the novelty, the chance, the admiration, the triumph, has departed from the game ; but they have lost, too, all sense of mortification at mistakes or defeat. Hold ; Q. had still one chord in touch with life. It was music—his " 'cello." He played precisely, accurately, well. He was jarred at the least want of time or tune. Even to this pastime, perhaps keeping the whole spirit fresh, he gave the air of desiccated coldness. The suggestion of thrill or enthusiasm, even for music, would



bring to his life the same time-worn, sarcastic smile. But supposing Q. had not that one softer hobby? Veritably he would have been a counterpart of the *homme à l'oreille cassée*.

However, a man can get on very well without the spark or liquidity of life. Exuberance is not always acceptable; often it is a nuisance. Wit, irony, anecdotes, knowledge, and experience may exist without life (imagination); very often they scintillate with the harder brilliance for the want of it. For true precision and systematic work this absence of spiritual moisture is indeed an essential. And this is what I am maintaining—that Q. was an excellent man in the office. To shallow or exuberant natures Q. was uncomfortably cold, but to one wrapped up in one's work, or of a methodical, practical mind, such a chief was a boon. He never fussed; he never "flew round"; he never came into the general office; he never said "What are we to do?"

He never cried over spilt milk, or found fault when a fault was beyond rectification. He never made promises of attention, but always attended to everything sooner or later, while seeming to discountenance it. He never showed satisfaction with the efforts of a junior, but took practical steps to procure him an appreciation better than empty words. He was in no hurry, and did one thing at a time ; but gradually he studied every branch of what was going on under him slowly, carefully, and fully. He did not leap to conclusions, or did not rush to others for advice until he had conscientiously exhausted his own reflection and experience, and did not disdain to make use of the experience of the humblest under him when it was useful. In fact, he considered all the bearings of a case, *and then made up his mind.* Do you know what that means—to have a chief who can make up his mind—one who arrives at a quiet decision, and then issues his instruc-

tions briefly and clearly? The delightful calm and regularity that ensued with two week's of Q.'s authority, after the two years of indecision and confusion that had existed under S., was as marked as the calm after a storm at sea. Abuses dropped out, errors in the returns disappeared, frauds on the revenue ceased, the channels of trade regulated and improved themselves. Under such a rule, carried on for a year or two uninterrupted, trade and revenue would increase. Q. had wide views and wide knowledge; he had worked hard and accurately in his youth, with an amount of painstaking and conscientiousness that surprised me as I read his old reports. He understood the trade as few understand it, with clear and orderly survey, but devoid of hobbies or enthusiasm.

JACK-IN-THE-BOX S.

Contrast with this his predecessor S. S., in the language of the junior's mess, waltzed on his ear,

and flew round like a pea on a hot shovel. S. dreaded giving offence, conciliated all of any influence with cringing servility, and bullyragged the humble. He could never make up his mind : could not sit down and reflect quietly by himself ; leapt to the most senseless conclusions, flew round asking every one's advice, arrived, after agonies of indecision, at the most indeterminate resolutions, which he had no sooner issued than he rushed out to countermand them and throw himself and the office into a chaos of confusion again. He was a little man, utterly lacking in self-confidence, dignity, or moral influence, despised and derided by every one, and most of all by his own staff. I will give you an instance of this in a little office sketch.

“ Oh, Lord ! here comes that confounded nuisance, Shirt, to kick up some rumpus or other. Watch him ; you 'll be amazed.”

This is how young B. spoke of his chief across the office to me. B. was

six months in the service and I was one. It was the "general office," a long, low "shanty," with over a dozen Chinese clerks and us two, B. being "in charge" of it. Outside was a garden, or inner court, with a covered way leading to the main building, where the Commissioner's Accountant's Return's, and Banker's offices were. I went and looked over B.'s shoulder out of the window and saw S. shambling ridiculously across with his big splay feet and dancing bent-kneed gait, hand up to his cropped moustache and beard, and frowning in perplexed effort to think what he was going to say. I got back to my desk, and B. stood up in front of the stove and lit a cigarette. Then the glass doors burst open and S. bursts in with a sort of indefinable *frou-frou* about him, which seems at once to stir up the mud and kick up a cloud of dust. He pulls up at the application-bar, where several coolies are tending their export applications or waiting for transit passes.

"Ph', ph', donawetter! this office is as stuffy as a pigstye! Here, you there, boy, what do you want to light the stove for on a day like this? Open a window, open a window, quick!"

The boys, or *ting-chais*, block the entrance towards our end, so he is headed off towards the head linguist's desk, to which he has a partiality. In fact, the chief reason of S.'s visits to the general office, where we youngsters said "he had no business" (!), was to air his Chinese. He spoke with a great deal of volubility, which he supposed was speaking well; and volubility is certainly a great advance on the ordinary student. It was, however, merely Norwegian translated into Wade, and concatenated with ph' ph's, donawetters, and *chih-tao*'s while the actual purport of his talk never came out clearly at all, being engrossed with "words at any price." And so there he goes, blowing round the native clerks like a grampus, and utterly confusing the question at

issue with his verbose and meaningless loquacity, and interrupting himself to comment on the documents on the desks, chide, upbraid, advise, always on wholly unfounded premises, until he reaches our end of the office. First he dances up to my desk, looks over my shoulder, says, "Ph', ph', that shouldn't be like this ; you are entering it all wrong ! No, no, I beg your pardon, I was mistaken ; that was not what I meant. At the same time you should be careful, you know ; you should consult older heads. B. there—well, I suppose he doesn't know much more about it than you do ; but if there is anything you are not certain about, bring it in to me ; bring it in to me. Don't take too much on your own responsibility. No, I know, I know. Still, it is best to be on the safe side. This, for instance, you have entered entirely wrong ; this is an application to export, and you have entered it as an arrival. Oh, no, I see ; I beg your pardon ; I have made a

mistake. Still, don't be too self-confident, don't be too self-confident."

Then he gets in front of young B., who is a head taller, and is rounding his handsome red lips to blow the smoke out in a ring, and looking languidly over his head.

"Now, Bryant, come, you know, you are forgetting yourself. Do you know who I am? Please to throw that thing away at once and attend to me! This, this, shipwrecked cargo! what is to be done? what do you mean? Explain yourself, explain yourself; what has happened? What does it all mean? Who told you? How is it it comes to you first, and not to me? And what do you mean by this memorandum? I can't make head or tail of it; the whole thing is incomprehensible. You have no right to write chits; you should come and explain it in person. You——"

"My dear Mr. S."—oh, that delightful patronising superciliousness

which none but a perfect novice can assume!—“My dear sir, in the first place, I knew you were busy, and I myself have a lot to do here, and should be delaying the work of the office if I am kept waiting outside your door; and secondly, if you had read my memorandum through you would have perceived that I have stated the whole circumstances far more succinctly than I could do by word of mouth. I——”

“B., B., you are entirely forgetting yourself! You don’t seem to know who you are talking to! I want explanations; I want comments; I want to know if you have looked up the instructions and the circulars. Oh, dear me, dear me; I wish I had an older hand whom I could consult! I am utterly at a loss; I can’t make up my mind; the whole thing is a muddle; I can’t make head or tail of it!”

And so, having completely delayed the whole work of the office for a quarter of an hour, and made an exhibition of his incapacity to

half a dozen merchant's runners, who have been kept waiting for their documents, he shambles out again without having attempted to come to any decision on what was the simplest little matter before he had kicked up the dust. Now he will put it off till to-morrow, while the cargo is left soaking in the leaking ship that has collided and run ashore two miles down the river, unless the tide-surveyor gives the agent an official hint to bring it up *without* a permit.

S. could never make up his mind ; things generally went by default unless the harbour-master or general office assistant avoided submitting it to him at all. Tide-waiters gave over seizing contraband that was never confiscated ; examiners gave over detecting "false declarations" that were never fined ; assistants gave ever suggesting improvements that were never approved ; and but for the excellence of the harness the very horse would have gone backward, for all the guidance and

incitement he got from the driver. He was one of those incapables who conceal their incapacity until they are entrusted with a post which requires alone all firmness and decision. Then they let things go to the dogs and devote themselves only to those points, generally of detail and expenditure, which come under the notice of the Head. They are wonderfully conscientious over the office accounts, and monthly reports, and condition of the buildings ; but the collection of the revenue, the honest assessment of duty and examination of goods, and the prevention of smuggling, entirely slips from their grasp. Excellent as are the checks and counter-checks, these are not things which will run by themselves. Bribery and corruption, or carelessness, are enemies always on the watch for laxity of oversight. Fortunately, as I say, no country possesses so efficient a check as the use of two languages and systems of writing and calculation for each transaction in connection

with the revenue ; and no country can possess better devised forms of duty-books and returns which keep a mechanical watch in themselves. But were the duty-accounts entirely conducted in one language, and only one people, such a head of department would speedily invite abuses or carelessness.

A POWERFUL HYPOCRITE.

“Grant” was the great standing hero of my admiration in this line. G. is, in my opinion, the coming man. I don’t see how mere circumstance can resist him. Imagine a man of iron constitution and trained athletic limbs, sound common-sense, prompt decision, adamantine resolution, a university degree, a college and China reputation in rowing, riding, and shooting, a few anecdotes, a song, and a long, down-pointed nose : here alone you have the sure makings of success. But when you add to this a craft study of men’s weakness, a social suavity

and tact, a Machiavellian foxiness and unscrupulosity, you have the makings, in my mind, of an irresistible coming man. (Grant is merely a fancy name, after the American general, of "keep on pegging-away" fame. I should not like any one of that name to flatter himself without a cause). To tell the truth, Grant and I were rivals ; not that, with his unerring acumen, he ever found anything to fear in me, but that I for a long time presumed to regard him as such, thinking, I believe, if anything, that I was the better man of the two. Grant beat me, walked away from me in everything. This will explain the envious acerbity that tinges my remarks. Grant never had anything but tolerant contempt for my rivalry, and all the time I thought he was striving as hard to beat me as I to beat him. Grant knew that there were other rivals in the world than I ; he was striving to beat the best one and all. I looked round to no one else ; I

thought if I can come in ahead of Grant I win. Perhaps I was right, but mine was a restricted rivalry ; he was a man of the world. Successful in a small way, when Grant came on the scene all my little superiorities fell one by one. I felt like Antony before Octavius. Grant disclaimed efficiency in everything. He would say at tennis, "Oh, you know it is no good my playing against you ; I 'm only good in a four as a more or less reliable back, but I can't make 'strokes,' you know, and I serve like a lady. I just get them over the net, and that's all." And then of course he would beat you. But only by a little, and then chiefly unintentionally. He had far too great diplomacy and self-control to indulge in victory for mere self-congratulation. This powerful self-control, as it gradually unmasked itself before us, filled me with dismayed awe. He professed his want of practice, experience, aptitude, with such humble deprecation, that

you began to put on slight patronising airs in discussing the particular sport in question, but G. would never disclose his mastership for vulgar triumph. Every passion of vanity or justifiable pride was subservient to the grand plan of his life. And this was his plan of life. This man, then, of rock-like common-sense, keen, un-fallacied knowledge of the world, boundless ambition, unswerving decision, iron will, said thus to himself, "I despise the herd of frivolous, weak, indecisive fools that make the world. I have the stuff, the strength, the resolution, to be their master, then I will be. Power alone shall be my guiding star. I will tie myself down to no rigid self-denial, taking the best of all things on my way ; but pleasure, friendship, love must be trodden on when they begin to grow on the straight path of my ambition. And how am I to gain power ? The power that I wish, the power of actual command and active rule,

depends on high position. At present for me it means promotion in the service. The most important faction for me is favour and influence and popularity. I cannot find favour with the weak and the strong ; I will make friends of the strong. Those who are in the position to recommend me, in however remote and round-about way, shall be my stepping-stones ; I will devote my whole energy and ability to find favour in their sight. The weak may still be kept neutral ; enemies are dangerous. I will conciliate all, at least I will avoid, in so far as my primary duty to the strong allows, hurting their feelings. After this I must prove myself a good office man, humble, prompt, obedient, and intelligent."

Armed with this broad but clearly marked line of conduct, Grant never hesitated. Whatever point of doubt occurred he weighed it by this code and made his choice. His great strength lay in this, the absence of vacillation. His sound perception

always grasped solidly the great guiding rules of experience, refusing to burden itself with the thousand petty details which over-weigh and hamper the ordinary Machiavelli. These were very few—the importance of decision, the importance of constancy and promptness in giving effect to the decision, the use of favour or influence, the danger of jealousy—that there is a time to be weak and a time to be strong. With these solid maxims he steered. And the first of these was decision.

Grant, in short, was a strong man, a terribly strong man. It was hard work, and it left its marks, but he never swerved. We had known each other a long time, and I read him intimately. He was perfectly aware of my intuition, for he had a very sensitive, or sympathetic perception ; our two minds, or souls understood each other thoroughly, though I do not say amicably, and yet his lips would not betray him. He would persist in a lie because he had decided on it. “Come,” I would say,

“between us two, sitting alone here, what is the good of keeping the mask on? I understand your principle thoroughly, and admire it, old fellow, but it 's waste labour with me. I don't blame you for cultivating Brown's acquaintance, it is undoubtedly a useful one; but confess that you see he is essentially a cad.”

“No, really you are wrong, M——. I am not a time-server, as you insist on pretending. If I thought Brown what you say, do you really think I should make a friend of him? I assure you you are quite mistaken in him; I myself did n't think much of him at first, I tell you candidly; but now I know him I see he has a great deal more in him than shows on the surface. He 's an excellent fellow, Brown; he 's been a good friend to me, and I don't like to hear you running him down, even in private.”

And yet the foxlike smile and deepening of the eyes told that it was a forced sacrifice of the sincerity of friendship. Poor G. ! he had

entered on a rocky path, but he was equal to the toil. His tactics brought upon him the hate or contempt of not a few honest and candid natives ; yet feeling it he held bravely on, taking it as one of the inevitable burdens.

He adopted the line of character most suited to his physical bent. He put on the rough, frank sportsman, " Give me my pony and my gun, and I am contented to plod on for ever. I am not ambitious ; I leave that to geniuses like M—. I 'm only a rough sort, you know ; not much of a scholar or a reader. I have got everything I want ; I like my work and the country, and don't care if I never get another promotion." At other times he would say he was sick of China and would n't remain in it much longer ; sooner be in the old country and married and settle down as a quiet country farmer. " It 's not as though I was keen on money and promotion, like M— here. My wants are easily satisfied. Why should I wear

my life out in this country? A nice little wife and a quiet fireside, that is what I look forward to!"

Oh, the hypocrite! The strong, the terrible hypocrite!

THE JUGGERNAUT OF PROMOTION.

Young B.'s delightful contempt for his master recalls a thought that has long boiled within my breast. It is in the cringing servility engendered by red tape. This independence of the young man who says, "all gentlemen, sir, are equal," is utterly boiled down in a year. When he first came, he said to me, "haw, you know, we don't care a damn for Shirt, beastly little nuisance. Have to tell him to shut up when he gets obstreperous. Wants the lid shut down on him every now and then like a jack-in-the-box on a hot shovel. If he gets dancing round you, just tell him to dry up. Tell him you know a jolly sight more about the work than he does, and you don't want him interfering with



your desk. He 's no right out of his own office at all, if it comes to that."

So B. after six months' service. How different a tale the next time we were together! He was serving nice easy balls to Shirt at tennis, applauding his strokes, going out for walks with him, standing up when he came into the office, consulting him on every trifling discrepancy. "Hallo, B.," I said, coming into the office at five minutes past ten, with my meerschaum pipe in my mouth, and sitting on the corner of his desk and reaching for the matches. "Here we are again, eh ? Same old story and same old game !"

B. looked at me with chill surprise. "I should be glad, M—, if you will try and be down by ten ; it sets such a bad example to the clerks, you know, and S. does n't like it."

"Oh, all right, old fellow. We use n't to care much what S. thought in the old days, if I recollect."

"Oh, well, that was different, you know. In the first place, he was

only 'in charge' then ; but we owe a certain amount of respect to a full commissioner. And then, you know, it 's all very well when you are a griffin ; but this sort of thing, you know, hardly looks well after you 've been two or three years in the service."

"Had a promotion lately ?"

"Er—no."

"Oh, thought you had. Well, you 're going to make up for lost time ; congratulate you. It 's time I followed your example. By the by, here 's some nonsense or other ; discrepancy of some sort : number of transit pass disagrees. Let him take it away and alter it, I suppose ?"

"Oh, what is it ? let me look. H'm ; looks like a swindle. Wang !"

We used to say "Mr. Wang" to the head linguist, a man of sixty years.

"Don't trouble," I say ; "I 'll look it up ; what do you do, then ? Take it across to S. ? Beastly nuisance, as he doesn't know anything about

transit passes ; however, I 'll just run across with it if you like, for look—see ! ”

“ Er,” calling me back, “ you will excuse me reminding you, M——, that it is *my* place, as senior Assistant, to submit discrepancies to the Commissioner if I think them sufficiently important ! ”

“ Oh, certainly, my lord ! ” I said, throwing the application down on his desk with a laugh, but without him relaxing his bridling self-importance ; “ take it in by all means yourself, my dear fellow ; I can't stand consulting that man ! ”

So it was ; B. was now standing in for promotion ; and the moment this spirit seizes a man, he is lost to sincerity and friendship. Henceforth his friendship stops short of all who can in any way be rivals ; his sincerity ends when it comes to criticise his Commissioner. No matter how often in days gone by he has ridiculed the notion of toadyism, and openly abused his chief, now he will force himself to con-

sciously lie to your face on his admiration for the man who sends the recommendations for promotion. He has learnt the great lesson of toadyism that every comment passed in the utmost privacy reaches the ears of its subject sooner or later ; therefore no longer will he criticise even to his bosom friend. The result is soon that friendship, that is perfect confidence and sincerity in conversation with another, is eradicated from the components of his life. He deliberately sacrifices it on the altar of his ambition.

Yes, the hardness of life arises from rivalry ; and this, of course, makes itself felt most prominently in a government service where there are a large number of young men in the same line, eager for promotion for the actual increase of money as well as from ambition and rivalry. And promotion is such a lottery ! The cleverest man is the one most likely to be left behind, as service requirements only watch for steady mediocrity, and cleverness is the

most apt to give proofs of unsteadiness. Hence heartburnings. Owing to this eagerness and uncertainty, after a few years the young government clerk becomes a man of the world in the worst sense of the word ; he becomes unscrupulously selfish. His sole object is to gain favour with the promotion-givers, and trip his competitors. I am sorry to avow such an opinion of human nature ; but despite the several specimens of disinterested men I have known—despite the assurances that a learned gentleman who used to correct my essays gave me, that philosophers had long abandoned selfishness as a root-motive—I still come to the conclusion that that motive is so strong among the world's competitors, that these two are their guiding aims : Namely, to curry favour with the prize-givers by every dignity-sacrificing artifice ; to disable rivals by the most unscrupulous and dishonorable means, such as false slander and tale-bearing.

Unless you are in the race yourself—unless you have felt the prompting of these vile jealousies—you will say it is a most unfounded aspersion on our civilisation. The many nice young men you know, *they* would not stoop either to forego their proper dignity or to slander; they would not condescend to speak true scandal of a rival, much less malicious or invented slander. Well, sir, I sincerely hope they are incapable of it. The first lesson a criminal learns, never to forget, is secrecy and hypocrisy. As soon as a man foregoes the unconscious self-respect of true honour, he learns, by becoming conscious of its existence (which he does in the very act of losing it), the signs by which it manifests itself to the eyes of on-lookers. You who meet him in society see him only as he is prepared to be seen. One of the very items of toadyism and slander is an air of disinterested proud ingenuousness. The combination of the two is his life's study. You must not

expect to discern these faults unless you are in the same environment. Honour and self-respect are not such common virtues as one might gather from faces. When you find a true gentleman, be he never so ugly or unfashionable, cherish him.

A bas virtue, honour, and love, when the juggernaut of promotion drags by.

Promotion—vile word ! In it in my memory is summed up the essence of slavery ! There has never existed a slavery with half so relentless a task-master ; the mere physical serfdom chained and lashed but the limbs, but the slavery of civilisation rivets iron to our very mind and soul, and causes self-respect, the last resource in life's box of hope, to stoop under the humiliation of the yoke. The mere condition of work—frittering the mind's powers away on utterly alien and uninteresting drudgery—makes the clerk more to be pitied than the slave ; but when you view the moral effects of his condition, you

first appreciate the depth of his abasement. What is the object of life? Surely we were born into this world either to do our duty to God as Christians, by the one doctrine, or our duty to ourselves and to nature, by true enjoyment of our brief allotted span, by the other. *Not*, surely (trite reflection!) the duty of living up to an arbitrary standard of laws and fashion, nor to the pleasure of working out arithmetical calculations required by some temporary head of department, or of amassing round pieces of senseless and unbeautiful metal. And yet such has become the *main object* of life to most. The communal laws that society, through Moses and Parliament, has built up for self-protecting cohesion and minimising of individual watchfulness have become their ultimate code of morals; their philosophy of pleasure has contracted itself to a mere negative avoidance of senseless fashionable disapproval. This is what civilisation has done for us: it



has made us the poor mechanical automata wired into the framework of an elaborate but rickety pantomime. In the place of live and thinking animals we have become the puppets of a show. Such are not the slaves of the body.

WANG.

Poor Wang ! How strange that at my first step on to Chinese soil I should have had thrown into my service the most patient, clever, and poetic of men (not Chinamen only) that I have ever met—one of those men who, taken in hand by a generous patron and given the means and leisure of self-development, become Fénélon and philosophers ! Such was Wang, I firmly assert, after the most careful study of his character for several years. But I was too stingy—that is the truth—to be that patron myself. He left me after six months to become an office-boy, which he still is, unless, which Heaven forbid ! he, too, has incurred

disgrace through his short and long-since-finished connection with me. If he is still there, may these lines yet meet the eye of some discerning Commissioner to lift him out of the slough of menial tasks into the chance of more congenial work. Many a time, unknown to him, I have watched him with a sigh sweeping the office and dusting the inkstands ; patient, because it was *useless* to complain ; careful and industrious, because he was conscientious, and because he was prudent, oh, so prudent, and knew better than to throw away at least a livelihood in following the profitless bemoanings of unrecognised genius ; and yet withal so gently, uncomplainingly disappointed at the cruelties of fate. And he never despaired. He was for ever educating himself. He had taught himself English ; what was far rarer among boys, he had taught himself Chinese. He wrote (Chinese) as well as any clerk. He could read (Chinese) despatches with perfect intelligence, and with very few

characters unknown. He could read novels without a hesitation. He made an excellent teacher for beginners : I learnt all my colloquial from him. And then, he would love to spend a leisure day in painting ; he would dare to project a work—a book of his own. And all this, poor fellow, amid squalid surroundings and continual family annoyances. One wife died ; his father-in-law forced him to marry her sister. He had invested his early savings in a patch of land. He had built a house ; he had let it. In his enforced absence from home he was cheated. His prudent, economic mind was distracted ; the capital of twelve years' work was gone. His mother-in-law died ; he had to bury her. Always saving, always sure of a place as boy, always kindhearted, he was dogged by a set of ne'er-do-well relations. They ridiculed his studies at home ; his fellow *ting-chais* were jealous if he attempted them in his leisure at the office, sitting in the draught of the passage and moment-

arilly interrupted—and patient, resigned, yet undismayed with it all. What I wanted to do for him was to provide him leisure and freedom from interruption to complete his knowledge of his own language at least. A self-taught man has such difficulties to contend against in China. He may read excellently for pages, until suddenly comes an illusion or quotation that he does n't understand. It is from some of the classics or histories ; it shows at once that he has not been through the curriculum. Confidence is lost in him ; he is not an educated man. This was my fear of launching Wang into the world as my teacher and a gentleman. Refined and intelligent as he was, he would at first have betrayed his lack of rudiments, and fallen between two stools. He would have met the fate of the jackdaw in the peacock's feathers. As this mattered little to me, however, I left it to him. I did at last, after turning the project over in my head for years, and when he had lost confidence in me and it was

too late—I did at last offer to make him my teacher—that is, practically to give him an idle life with the use of my room and books and instruction in English, with the same pay as he was getting legally guaranteed for five years. In other words, with an immense wrestle with my meanness, I was prepared to lay down five hundred dollars in an act of pure benevolence. He was diffident of himself, and furthermore, distrustful of me. After two weeks' indecision he refused. Heaven grant that that distrustfulness may have saved him from suspicion when I proved the sound sense of his mistrust by hurling myself and those with me headlong into ruin.

People will say that there are always men like this whom it would be pleasant to help, whom we think poverty-depressed geniuses, just because they *are* poor and uneducated. But I suspected my own benevolence ; I thought of this. I watched many Chinamen with unbiassed eye, with a suppositious hundred pounds

in my hand, to be spent on no other object. I looked long at some of whom I was fond, some who had served me faithfully and with risk. I was not fond of Wang. His catlike hesitation and prudence enraged me. His penetration read the weakness of my character and mistrusted it, which galled me. His moderation and temperance accorded ill with my enthusiasms, my rashness, and my pleasures. I did not like him ; I disliked him ; and yet, at the last, as at the first, I came to the conclusion that he was the one man ever thrown in my way whom I was called on to help.

For I believe that when you, and you alone, see genius, as you think, perishing for a little succour, then it is your *duty* to help. You may be wrong ; but if you conscientiously think that such is the case ; if you know that you alone in a life-time will see it thus, that with you alone rests the desire to give it a helping hand, or pass by and let its flickering hope sink back for ever into the



slough of despond, then I hold this is *your* Heaven-sent mission of benevolence. The many make the souls and bodies of the poor their mission of charity. How rare is he who goes about to rescue a mind !

And Wang was the first Chinaman I met. The man whom I was replacing asked me to take him back to Chinkiang as boy. I could keep him or not as I wished.



A SHOOTING TRIP ON THE
GRAND CANAL



A SHOOTING TRIP ON THE GRAND CANAL.

“ **C**OME along with that *chow*, boy !”

The table is square, with a network of legs that prevent you from getting under it ; it is most ingeniously contrived to collapse at unexpected intervals. We are lighted by a bit of reed-pitch dangling out of a saucer filled with bean-oil stood on an iron candlestick ; the confounded boy had, as usual, forgotten the candles. A panel is moved in the back of the cabin, and a grimy hand passes in the soup. It is accompanied by a puff of smoke and garlic, which is what you pay for a favourable wind. Then we suddenly discover there is no salt

on the table. The boy is seized, and can't remember if he brought it or not ; says he left it to the cook. Before we slay him we leave the table and search ; lo, in the bottom of the basket something wrapped in newspaper is grabbed ; with trembling we gather round to see it opened—it is sugar ! No, the boy daubs his tongue over it : " All right, belong salt, master ; belong Chinese salt ! " Saved again. After dinner we try a smoke on deck and work up an admiration for the silent snake winding in white moonlight through its high embankments, that centuries of digging out have reared to the size of hills and cliffs ; then we vote it too cold and turn in for a game of nap. Directly we get round the table one of its legs gets pushed to the side where there is no floor plank. Everything collapses, the light falls to the floor, burns one of the pups' tails, and nearly sets the house on fire ; the cards get soaked in oil, and the dogs bark and leap on to our beds with oily feet. There

is only one spot where you are safe in a Chinese boat, and that is bed ; when we are snuggled up we discuss the morrow's arrangements. R. is for getting up as usual, eating a good breakfast, and getting off leisurely for a good day's tramp, with sandwiches for *tiffin*. F. says all right, only its just as well to come back to the boat for *tiffin* ; all the best shooting's near the canal, and besides, the birds won't get up in the heat of midday. I say I am going to be out before sunrise, and get them while they are all out feeding in the beans and cotton, then I shall lie in and read till the evening.

In the morning I slept on manfully through a lot of clattering of boots and yapping of dogs, until I smelt the coffee ; then, and then only, did I reluctantly yawn forth and slip on my coat and boots over my pyjamas. Of course those other men had been up with the lark and bagged half a dozen birds that were feeding like tame chicken just on the brow of the embankment,

and had washed and brushed and donned dainty spotted shirts and knickerbockers. That's just like pre-arrangements. They reviled me for laziness and general filthiness, and then I showed them how to eat breakfast.

They had scarcely eaten for ten minutes before they began to get up with their mouths full and don cartridge bags and wipe out their guns. When I had finished I ate an apple or two and got to bed again with my pipe, waiting till those fellows had made all their confusion and got out on deck. I then took two cartridges and gave my gun to a coolie to carry, together with a cartridge bag, only it did n't contain cartridges. It contained a book, a bottle of cold tea, and sandwiches: I was n't going to be tied to those fellows. I stalked one beast of a bird—I suppose it was a pheasant—that sat pluming his wing about a yard off, but he ran away. I followed with my gun ready to go off, until he rose.

"Why did n't you fire?" said R.

"Why, you fool! I was waiting for the beast to stop, of course!" I must own I got the idea from *Punch*, but those fellows never read papers.

To tell the truth, I had pulled the trigger pretty hard too, only I had forgotten to cock the gun, or for that matter to insert cartridges.

After that I let them go, and marched round to a village to have a chat with the natives; then I saw a lot of fine pigeons on the trees, and ordered the gun again. I aimed very steadily before the expectant crowd, and then pulled both triggers at once and knocked the tree down; I believe I even hit the pigeon, for I saw a feather floating in the air. However, it's really too fatiguing holding a heavy piece of iron which makes a headache noise when you use it, so I just sloped off to a shady spot on the canal bank, under three high trees at the back of a temple, and lay me down. I was not alone in my appreciation of the only true

way of enjoying sport, for my pup and the coolie heartily accorded, and lay at length hard by. Here I enjoyed myself making sketches of the canal and the boats goose-winging up, of the temple and the trees, and the coolie and the priest, with an occasional read of "Brer Rabbit," a pull at the tea, and a suck at the pipe. I should have lain there all day, only about twelve I saw those other two sweating back hot and weary, so I shadowed them. They had both come out in deerstalking caps, and had nearly got a sun-stroke, besides which not a bird had they seen after the first hour. The first thing they did was to sponge their heads in cold water, and then I saw R. make a dive down to the bottom of the ice-chest. I said nothing, and lay low. Then two tumblers were produced; but I said nothing and lay low. Then the boy produced cold pheasant and sandwiches; still I lay low. Then R. uncorked the fizz and poured out, and I quietly stepped in and



took his glass and sandwich, and said, "Thanks, here's luck!" He protested, but I answered, "No, old chap, you don't play this low down game on me. If you go and drink that you'll have a headache!"

"What d' you mean?" says he.

"Just wot I sez," I reply. (That's the worst of reading Uncle Remus. You lapse back to the primeval purity of backwood language.) Then they told me what splendid sport they had had, and would n't have come back but that they were afraid of running out of cartridges. After *tiffin* I went to sleep, while they toiled out again in the blazing sun; then I had tea and started out at 4.30. To begin with, directly I got to the temple I saw a couple of pheasants on the roof (a fact), and potted one in cold blood, as it was no use letting them disappear over the other side. Then I got the other side of the mulberry grove and sent the dog and coolie in. I knew they'd be there; they lay in the shade during the day, and were

just beginning to wake up from their dinner. Out they ran, half a dozen of them, till they saw me ; two doubled back, and the others got up and gave me a right and left. I marked the other two into a red patch and hunted the grove over again, resulting in a fourth. Then I got well up to the other end of the reeds and put the dog in, and winged one as he rose, and the other as he flew over the canal. A passing boat picked it up and continued on their course, so I spattered two successive shots just in front of them, and they lowered sail and surrendered. Then I worked the beans and sunflowers down under the Table Hill and added two more, which contented me. On my way back I hunted up the quail that I had put up while after the pheasants, and bagged a brace. I strutted back as proud as a cock pheasant. But I did n't let on to those fellows ; they would have patronised me. They brought back eleven brace of pheasants, a deer, half-a-dozen snipe, and a racoon ! I

lay low and said nothing ! It 's no good going out with a fellow like R. I think we hung up fifteen or sixteen brace in the stern. So cocky were those two fellows that they went through the other two quarts of gold seal at dinner.



J.'S LAST HORROR

201



J.'S LAST HORROR.

A SKETCH OF THE PORT DRUNKARD AND HIS BOY LOUT.

I WAS coming along the deserted
bund about ten o'clock one night
(in August), on my way home,
and walking in the moonlight, when
from the tree shade along the wall a
tall, shaky-legged apparition stepped
out towards me, using a battered old
tremulous walking-stick to support
each short, tremulous step. He
came to a shaky, bent-kneed halt,
and said—

“ Hullo, M——, old boy, out for a
stroll ? ”

It was not, however, a hearty greet-
ing—far from it. It was subdued
and nervous ; it was preliminary to

something he had on his mind. The poor old purple face was *blème*, the little wrinkle-lost eyes looked furtively around, and the skinny hand on the stick shook. I stopped still with a little compunction to hurting the poor old fellow's feelings, although, hard-hearted with my own anxieties as I was growing, I had come to consider him an intolerable nuisance. So I stopped and said irritably—

“Hullo, J.; what's the matter now?”

He answered in a voice painfully assuming the rights of fellowship—painfully off-hand, as one who expects and means to resist a refusal.

“I say, old man, I want you to give me a shake-down for to-night, if you don't mind.”(We were always “old” to each other then, somehow, just as schoolboys are “young.” Insolated settlements get into this way).

“All right, old man,” I answered to this strange request, pitying him through my annoyance. “I suppose I can manage it ; we will stroll along

together. Something gone wrong with the ranche?" (his own dwelling).

His voice sank, he looked fearfully around him, and his knees and hands shook.

"I dare n't go near the place, old man—my life 's not safe. They 're hunting me down!"

"Good heavens, old fellow!" I exclaimed, facing round. "What 's up? What do you mean?"

"Sh! Don't speak so loud! The ruffians are on my track now. Great God!" (getting hold of my arm), "There, is n't that a shadow there?"

There *was* some one dodging behind a tree, a Chinaman, but I reassured him.

"That 's nothing, old man; tell us all about it. I have n't heard anything of this before."

"They 're hunting me down, I tell you," he said, his voice catching in low gasps, and his furtive eye still glancing beyond me into the shadow of the wall. "There was that blood-thirsty ruffian Bultz—it was this all the time"—and he imitated with

trembling ferocity the sharpening of a razor on his sleeve—"standing in the doorway; and O'Reill—snap, snap, snap!" His skinny finger pulled the trigger of an imaginary revolver in the air. "I tell you it is mere chance that I am alive now. If that pistol had gone off the ruffians would have shot me dead; as it is he snapped it four times. I can't make out how it is, but luckily it missed fire. Snap, snap, snap, I tell you," in a subdued shriek, "and each time flashed in the pan. There was a whole host of them there—all armed with swords and knives and revolvers, and dancing round me. The dastardly cowards! They had taken away my revolver, or they would n't have dared to face me. I tell you," bringing his stick down and shouting, "I'd fight the whole crowd of them, fair play, man to man! I put my hand under the pillow, and when I found they had stolen it I just gave up quietly, and said, 'Here I am, you can kill me. You have taken away my revolver, and so you are

safe, you cowards. Only shoot me straight. Put your bullet here.' I bared my breast, and put my finger on my heart. 'You're welcome to shoot me, only wait until I make my will and write a line to A. G. Good.' I then made my will and enclosed it in a note to A. G. Good, and came away."

"When did all this happen, old chappie?"

"Why, just now. I have told you, I had just gone to sleep when the blookthirsty ruffians broke in with a lot of knives and pistols."

"And then you dressed and came out here?"

"I tell you I heard the click of the trigger—snap, snap, snap! And with that cowardly, bloodthirsty ruffian Bultz sharpening a great long knife, and swearing he would have my liver!"

"And they went on snapping their revolvers while you dressed and made out your will?"

"I tell you there were more of them—rifles, guns, swords! I just

bared my breast and said, 'Fire ! I am not afraid of you, you cowardly ruffians. I am ready !' and I pointed to my chest."

"Well, I'm jolly glad some of those revolvers flashed in the pan, old chap," I remarked ; "I don't know what might have happened if they had gone off. Let us mooch round to your diggings and see that they have n't pulled the house down, shall we ? Perhaps they 'll have gone."

The fact was I wanted to get him to go back to his own place instead of mine. But he drew back.

"No," he said. "It is as much as my life's worth to go back there while those ruffians are lurking about."

"Well," I said, "I really must just go and have a look. I 'll see if I can't clear them out. You wait for me on the bund, here. I 'll be back in a moment."

With that I darted down the side-alley by Duff's, for I saw he was terrified at being left alone, while I

was curious to see if there really was anything the matter.

There was no one down-stairs as usual. I ran up, and found no one but that diminutive little son of the Fat Boy's (in his red breeches and J.'s old tail-coat, reaching nearly to his heels) crouching timidly in the passage. (The Fat Boy was the name we gave to J.'s servant—of whom more anon.)

"Well, little man," I said, "where's your father?"

"He's gone out to look after master."

"And what's the matter with your master?"

The diminutive imp smiled timidly; he had not been there long, but he had found that was the best explanation to give of his master's condition. Just then the Fat Boy came back, panting. Loving action rather than words, he went to a little coal-locker under the stairs, stooped in and drew out something wrapped in paper, opened it, and handed it to me. It was J.'s revolver.

He simply looked at me with that deprecating smile that spoke of so much love and sorrow for his master, and depreciation of a stranger's harsh judgment.

"He is very bad to-night," he said, still panting. (I was an old friend of his master's, although during the last year I had begun to drop his acquaintance, as he became more and more of a nuisance. So I was an old confidant of his boy's—the most faithful of Chinese servants, big, corpulent, with fat, smiling baby face.) "Oh, to-day, bad! I had to take this away from him" (the revolver). "He thinks there are a lot of people in his room. He has been shouting and pointing his revolver out of the window at passers-by, and at me. He thinks I want to kill him—*I*!" (with pathetic baby smile). "Then he rushed out on to the bund, where he met you, sir. I was following him, dodging behind the trees. What shall I do, master? what shall I do? He cannot stay in his room without seeing devils and shouting and running away."

“That is all right, my boy ; he is coming round to me. You get his pyjamas and slippers and go round to the Custom House and tell my boy to rig up a bed. We 'll get him all right.”

“Thank you, master.”

I was more gratified by that honest fellow's thanks than the service justified. It was no act of friendship for the master. Long and useless forbearance had worn out what pity I had for him ; and as done for the servant, it was too little to put against the long and patient suffering that that true friend and nurse had felt vicariously for every sign of disgust and weariness displayed towards his charge. For J. was nothing else than his charge. The honest fellow loved and watched over the poor drunkard with the tenderness of a nurse for its foundling ; and every slight that passed unnoticed over the dulled sensitiveness of the master found a billet in and wounded the tender, simple heart of the boy.

I hastened back and found J.

quaking, and doing his best to hide his fear. He quickly came towards me and linked his arm in mine.

"Oh, here you are, old chap," he greeted me, with a ghastly attempt at ease; "I was waiting for you."

"All right, old fellow, come along. They've cleared out of the ranche now, and nothing touched; only you may just as well come along and put up with me. I've told the Lout."

The Lout was J.'s name for his boy.

We mounted to my room, and J. seemed momentarily more at his ease. Still, he did not sit down, but while pretending to examine my curios fidgeted about as though looking for something.

"Won't you sit down, old man?"

He sat down, and presently said, offhandedly, "You don't happen to have a drop of whiskey knocking about the place, old man?"

I scented mischief. I said I would go and look for some, and

went out and told my boy to hide up all the drinks and say there was none. Then I came back and called out to the boy, "Get some whiskey, boy."

"No have got, sir; yesterday all finish."

"All finish? Why, there must be some somewhere."

"All finish," he repeated stolidly.

"I'm sorry, old man," I said, turning to J., "I'm run out of it; have something else? Have a little claret and soda?"

I caught a baleful gleam of suspicion in his eye, quickly suppressed.

"Oh, have n't you got any whiskey?" he said coldly; "well, give me a glass of water, my boy."

The boy brought him a glass of water; it was curious to watch the sly Celestial curiosity mingled with contempt with which he watched this phenomenon while he waited for the glass. Perfectly grave all the while to the outward eye, he understood the situation well, and of old.

The next thing was to rig up a bed for J. We took the sofa out on to the balcony ; I said it would be cooler for him. The real reason was that there would be less chance of his breaking anything if he commenced fighting his imaginary enemies during the night.

“ Well, old fellow,” I said, “ there you are. Curl up and make yourself as comfortable as you can. You won’t be disturbed here.”

He did n’t seem quite satisfied yet.

“ Thanks, old fellow, it’s awfully kind of you ; b—b—you’ve got an awful lot of doors in this place,” looking uneasily at the glass folding-doors that opened into the dark storeroom.

“ Well, never mind that. J. I’ll shut ‘em all. Besides, my dogs are sleeping outside, and they are sure to go for them—or any one else that’s about, for that matter.”

This I said to keep *him* from wandering, for he had a wholesome hatred of my dogs.

“ Thanks, thanks. I know it’s quite safe. Still, I’d be glad if you’d—if, in fact, you’d just give me some sort of weapon. You know the ruffians stole my revolver, and I don’t feel safe ; I don’t feel safe, old man !”

There was something uncanny in his sober recognition of how the case appeared to me with his own ill-concealed but very real fear of these imaginary demons. His whole conduct was full of that terrific method in madness so hard to cope with. I brought him a big club of mine.

“ There, old fellow,” I said, “ put that by your side. I’ll guarantee that if you give them a tap with that they won’t trouble you again.”

He took it and said thanks, but still seemed doubtful. I got him to undress and lie down, and then retired to my own bedroom, leaving the door open.

He was a nuisance. I regretted having put myself out to please his boy. Why should I take upon

myself to soften the lot of others? No one ever did it to me. Every one had to bear their own burdens. I was falling off into a troubled slumber when I heard J.'s voice just outside my mosquito-curtain saying, "M——"

I jumped up and saw the skinny old form standing there with the stick. So I was open to this sort of thing, was I? To have this madman creeping in on me like this?

"Well, what the—— do you want now, old man?" I asked, coming out of my mosquito-frame. "I tell you you're all right there. Why don't you go to sleep?"

He had all along a nasty furtive way of avoiding my eyes.

"I don't feel safe, old man! They may come in at any of those doors—you've got such a confounded lot of doors!—This stick—it's very kind of you, old man—but if you had a pistol to lend me—they have stolen my revolver——"

"Well, take that pistol up on

the wall there," I said, pointing to a saloon pistol hanging under my guns.

"That's no good, it's not loaded," with a gleam of furtive suspicion and anger.

"All right, then, I'll give you a loaded one, and I hope that will keep you quiet, for I want to go to sleep."

I then went to my writing-table and took out one of my pocket derringers, thrusting the few loose cartridges far back under the papers. I then went through a rapid process of opening and snapping the breech, and handed it to him.

"There, that's loaded and cocked," I said. "Be careful how you use it. It goes off deuced easy, so be careful you don't shoot yourself by mistake."

I trusted to the threat and the peculiar way of side-opening to prevent him discovering that it was unloaded. Then I went back to bed, this time shutting the door so that he should not creep in on

me again. I fell into a heavy slumber.

I sat up and listened ; crash again. There was something up in the next room. I jumped out of bed, picked up a light cane, and opened the door. This was what I saw.

The hanging lamp was still burning, turned low. Under it, in the middle of the room, stood J. in his loose pyjamas and bare, red feet, with a stick in his hand ; a skinny, menacing form, crouching there under the lamp, like a terrified but dangerous animal, the purple, bloated face and skinny neck craned forward, with bloodshot little eyes glaring fearfully towards some object in the corner. The would-be threatening hand shook so that the stick rattled on the bare floor. There he stood, crouching and glaring and muttering. He took no notice of my entrance : his eyes were still riveted on the corner. I looked ; there on the round table

lay the remnants of a big blue vase, lately bought after weeks of negotiation, and dear ; he had smashed it to atoms.

“ Come on, then, you murderous ruffians ; come on ! You 've stolen my revolver, but the old dog 's got fight in him yet. Come on ! ”

“ That 's right, old fellow,” I said. “ Lick into them ! Let them have it ! ”

Slowly he moved his head and unrecognising eyes round to me ; and then, after a moment's stare, suddenly jumped back a pace, resuming the crouch and craning neck and shaking stick, terrified yet menacing.

“ You cowards ! You blood-thirsty cowards ! You are afraid to meet me fairly, one by one ! Stand back ! ” he shrieked ; “ stand back, or, by God, I 'll fire ! ” And he slowly raised the other hand. It held the derringer.

“ Fire away, old chap,” I said, laughing. “ You 're a match for the whole crowd of them with that revolver ! ”

A blinding flash in my eyes, and

a deafening roar in my ears, and the sound of shivered glass falling on the floor behind me! . . . After a few seconds I took my hands from my face, and as my sight gradually steadied itself I saw J. with his back turned to me bending over a small table. Picking up my cane, which I had let fall when the pistol went off, I stepped up and looked over his shoulder. He had two or three cartridges on that table, and was trying to fumble one into the breech. His hand trembled so that each time he missed the hole and dropped it on to the table. I gave him a smart tap on the wrist with my stick ; he dropped the pistol and jumped forward with a howl, upsetting the table and falling over it. When he picked himself up he gave a short, forced laugh, saying—

“ Hullo, M——, old chap, is that you ? I was just trying to load this pistol you gave me ; you forgot to put a cartridge in, so I just—just looked in your drawer for one ; hope you don’t mind ? ”



"What, have you been having any more trouble with those fellows, old man?"

"N—no, no; only I thought it best to be on the safe side in case they should attack me—ha, ha!"

I was horrified at this maniacal cunning and duplicity; there was something vindictive and dangerous gleaming in his furtive eye that belied this apparent unconsciousness. However, thinking that kindness was the best way of dealing with him, I took him by the arm, saying—

"Well, come along back to bed, old fellow, and leave the pistol there; I'll see that they don't attack you again."

He accompanied me for a pace, and then of a sudden a skinny hand was about my throat.

"You damned sneaking cad, you're one of them! You hid the whiskey and you hid the cartridges, but you don't get round this child! N—no; too old a bird for that sort of game, you know, by a long chalk!"

He dropped his hand as suddenly and took my arm.

“ You must excuse me, old chap, if my language is not exactly parliamentary, ha, ha ! I’m not well, you know ! I’m not well ! ”

I said nothing but led him to the balcony, determining to tie him to the bed, for it seemed the only way of keeping him out of harm if I was not to watch over him the whole night myself. For that purpose, as soon as he had laid down, I turned my back to him, in order to tear up a common muslin sheet, to make bands when of a sudden I felt a scorching pain behind. I swung round and found that the maniac had taken the candle which stood by his bed and applied it to my clothes. I tore off the loose cotton jacket and flung it, blazing, into the corner ; fortunately the balcony was quite bare of furniture and there was no wind, so I was able to let it consume itself without danger. I then pounced on him and held him down with my foot on his chest—poor old fellow, he was as weak as a kitten—while I bound the long

bands right around his body and the bed.

"Now get fooling about," I said, not a little viciously, as you may imagine.

"All right, if you are going to treat a guest in your own house in this way, it's deuced like a gentleman, that's all I can say," he said sulkily.

I returned to the sitting room. The first thing that met my eye was a pistol lying on the floor with the breech open, and the cartridges scattered about; the next, the picture over my bedroom door with the glass smashed and a hole in it. But for the fact that these pocket derringers kick violently, and require a strong, steady hand, that hole would be in my forehead. This was a pleasant sort of guest to entertain. And there lay my precious blue vase. Well, well; poor old fellow!

I was too sleepy to moralise.

The next morning I was sipping my tea in bed when the boy entered with a lot of bottles under his arm.

He banged them down on to the table, pushing my tea to one side.

"Don't, boy," I said, trying feebly to pull my cup to the front again. "Don't come worrying me with your empty bottles and domestic accounts at this time of day." It was in fact the only enjoyable hour of the day to me out there. I thought he was coming to prove by bottle that he was justified in ordering some more beer or wine; for I generally accused him of theft when he came to say the dozen was finished—about the most foolish thing one can do with servants.

He planted them down and looked at me; and his look said, "Now who was right—you or I?" But I could not at the moment recollect to what earthly subject such a triumphant reproach could refer. So I simply said, testily—

"Well, what is it, boy? Do be quick about your confounded mystifications."

"Look at those bottles, master," was all he deigned to reply.

"Yes, yes, I see," I said, turning them round. "Whiskey, brandy, caraçoa. Now you are not going to tell me these are finished. There was at least half a bottle of whiskey the other night, the brandy I only opened on Sunday for Mr. —, and I know the stone bottle has been on the sideboard a long time but no one ever touches it except for an occasional cocktail. If you fellows have been taking advantage of the stone, I 'll fine every one of you all round and start waxing up the bottle every day like Mr. Shirt. Take them away, boy ; take them away."

The boy listened to this tirade with unmoved face, unless it were a suspicion of pitying sarcasm in the black eyes. He took them, one by one, and turned them up to show that they were empty. Then he pointed his finger towards the next room.

"Great heavens," I said, sitting up, "you don't mean to say that Mr. J.—?"

"Yes," answered my boy hotly—

he had always strongly discountenanced my encouragement of the poor old drunkard ; "last night me puttee inside cupboard, mess-room, lock door, take away key, all same you say ; this morning, I go look see—door open, all finish ! You can askee Ni-ta ! "

And Nita, the mess-room coolie, who had probably been retained waiting at the door to give evidence, came in with a grin on his monkeyish features, and stood just outside the sacred precincts of my draw-back, mosquito-curtains, and said nothing, which might be taken as corroboration. "Send that grinning idiot away, boy," I said, "and take away these bottles too ; I don't care what he drinks. You ought to have been more careful."

"Don't say we stole it, that 's all," retaliated the boy hotly ; then stolidly gathered up the bottles and withdrew.

When I was dressed and went into the next room I found J. standing at the mantelpiece and

looking at my chinaware (which made me tremble), dressed, and apparently in his right mind.

“Good morning, M——,” in a cold, fashionable tone.

“Good morning, J. I’m afraid I’ve kept you waiting for your breakfast.”

“Not at all, not at all. I’m a very poor breakfast eater.”

“Well, come and keep me company over a cup of tea at least,” said I, leading the way into the mess-room. He followed leisurely with a slightly offended air. What characterised him throughout this episode was either a restlessness or offended dignity which kept him standing as if looking for something instead of sitting sociably down.

“Well, how did you sleep old man?”

“Oh, thanks, all right. That is to say, as well as one could expect in this weather,” coldly.

“Not disturbed?”

“N—no, thanks.”

“Let’s have it out, old man.

Last night you said there were some fellows hunting round after your liver, with daggers and that sort of thing. Have they knocked off?"

"Oh, I shall put a stop to their pranks to-day," coldly. "I shall go to the Consul and claim the restitution of my revolver. I shall state the facts of the case quite calmly. But I shall insist on having my property returned before I can discuss the question of an apology. Then, if they like to bind themselves over in proper cognisances to keep the peace, I may perhaps forego further prosecution. Otherwise," warming up, "I shall most certainly prosecute. You know, I can put up with a great deal; but I refuse, I simply refuse, to go about with my life in danger. It is simply unheard of. It would not be tolerated in any civilised country, and by God it shall not be tolerated here!" Calming down, "You were kind enough, old fellow, to give me a shakedown in your diggings here

last night, and you see I could n't do anything else ; it was as much as my life was worth to return to my own place, as those ruffians had simply taken possession. But they, they hunted me out here. They — ”

“ What, you don't mean to say they attacked you—they attacked you here in my quarters ? ”

“ No, no, old man. The cowardly ruffians were afraid to attack me in another man's house, but I heard them out in the garden under my window—I wonder how they found out I was here ? ”

“ Come, old fellow, they could n't have got in without the gate-keeper seeing them ; and I asked him this morning, and he swears— ”

Snappishly. “ Now look here, old fellow. Of course, if you're going to tell me that I am telling a lie, or that I don't know a thing when I hear it, why, then I've got nothing to say, except that I should call it, to put a *mild* term on it, deuced bad taste ; that's all. I tell

you I heard the bloodthirsty cowards talking under that balcony window last night just as plainly as I hear you now. O'Reill said, 'He 's up there, where that light is ;' and that murdering villain Bultz said, 'I 'll have his liver ! I 'll have his liver !' And sharpening a big knife backwards and forwards, like this, all the time. You know it 's getting beyond a joke when a fellow has to go in peril of his life. I 'm not a coward—I think you know that, old chap ; but I 'm not as active as I used to be, and I 'm no match, unarmed, against a dozen powerful ruffians like that armed with knives and revolvers. 'I 'll have his liver !' those were his very words ; and when it comes to that it 's getting beyond a joke, you know. What would you advise me to do, old chap ?"

So he had still got them ; and with all this sober, open-to-argument reasonableness too ; after trying to murder me and drinking more than half a bottle each of

brandy, whiskey, and liqueur on the sly !

It was appalling.

I considered that in this case argument only tended to strengthen his conviction ; and so, pitying him though I did, I made fun of him. Towards the end of breakfast the doctor came in for a cup of tea, and asked J. in the usual jocular way—

“ How goes it, J. ? ”

“ All right, thanks,” suspiciously. When they get it this way they suspect every one of disbelieving them—in other words, of insulting them.

“ J. was putting up with me last night,” I said. “ Got hunted out of his own quarters by a pack of murderers. Narrow escape ; serious danger.”

“ What 's that ? What 's this, J. ? Tell us about it. I 've not heard a word of this. When did it happen ? ”

“ Yes, it 's too bad, you know,” said J. “ It 's getting beyond a joke when a fellow sees a couple of ruffians standing over his bed with drawn knives and revolvers, swear-

ing they'll have his liver. Sna snap : I tell it was just touch an go, or I shouldn't be alive to tell th tale now. 'Just give me time,' said, 'to make my will and write line to A. J. Good, and then yo can break your bloody will. I am defenceless ; you have stolen m revolver. I tell you, doctor, ol man, it's got beyond a joke. I've had about enough of it.'

The doctor looked puzzled.

"Why, when was this ? Who What ?"

"Oh, well," offendedly, "of course if you doubt my word I've nothin more to say, except that if yo mean to be polite, you're havin deuced poor luck, that's all."

Poor old fellow ! The quaint turn of speech that used to be genuine humour in happier days, with the accompaniments of winks and head waggings, were tragic now. We didn't like to laugh.

"Why, I'm not doubting yo word, J., for a minute ; only you've rushed in *medias res* before I've

quite hooked into the beginning. What was it, M——? How did it begin?"

"Why, he 's told you," I answered, solemnly. "Hunted out of house and home. Pursued by brigands. Narrowest shave in the world. Pistol snapped in the pan."

The doctor now perceived that there was a joke somewhere and enjoyed it hugely. Whispering to him not to enlighten any one, I went down to the office. The poor old fellow came down too shortly after with the same circumstantial story to the Commissioner and other Assistants, and then went on to the Consulate to have his pursuers bound over to keep the peace. Every one was hoaxed at first, especially as by repetition he had found a few new touches of verisimilitude; then they began to "tumble to the joke," in the language of the poor old fellow's facetious days. The club at the twelve o'clock cocktail was convulsed over the recital; the famous joke of the

morning was to put up a finger and say, snap, snap, snap; or seriously sharpen an imaginary knife on the sleeve. The humorous, sensitive, generous, simple-minded gentleman, fallen by stages during the last twenty years before their eyes to the character of the village drunkard was dead-beat, a nuisance, an eyesore, was considered a fit butt for ridicule with his "horrors." A few *spoke* words of momentary pity; none felt it. He was an intolerable nuisance. We had pitied him so often. He was a disgrace to the port; a danger to every one who went near him, if he got possession of his revolver again. A good riddance if he was to go off his hook; the best thing that could happen to him. J. die? Had n't he been going to die every summer for the last Heaven knows how many years? It is always those fellows who never die.

I went back and found J. sitting in my room, which irritated me. I

hoped to have got rid of him. He got up and moved about, fingering things. I sat down to *tiffin*, which was spread on the table for me.

"You will excuse me beginning, old man," I said coldly. "I have to get down to the office by one." The boy brought the soup and I began, showing plainly in my face the annoyance I felt at his presence in my room.

Then he said, in that now common tone of wounded pride and self-assertion—

"You have n't got a bit of *tiffin* to give me, have you ?"

I could not have offered a greater insult than what I was doing. I felt myself a brute. But still I hardened myself; what was the good of showing common politeness to him? He would only sponge on me the more.

"I suppose so. If you are not going back to your own diggings I daresay the boy can put something up. Sit down. Boy, get some *tiffin* for Mr. J."

The boy looked daggers, then stolid, and said there was nothing in the house.

"Oh, don't trouble," said J., haughtily, and deeply hurt, but determined to assert his rights to fellowship by staying, and prompted doubtless, I sorrow to think of it, by a genuine dread of leaving this asylum from the terrors of his imagination. "I never eat anything; I only go through the form of eating."

My conscience smote me. I felt ashamed of my coarseness. Recollecting his predilections I thought to repair my rudeness by giving him the only thing he cared for. J. only took soup; but then his boy made excellent soup—a sort of stock pot.

"Open a tin of hotch-potch," I said to the boy.

"There is n't any," he replied, simply following my original lead.

"Then get some," I retorted angrily, turning round and venting my self-shame in abuse on the one man who endeavoured to guard my

interests. "Get some, and mind your manners a little better towards my guests!"

With a look of disgust he went into the store-room and found that there actually was none; no tinned stuff of any sort. I gave up the effort to treat poor J. considerately. He was given a plate of my own pretence of a soup, and a watered second edition at that. He put a spoonful to his mouth and unostentatiously, but with suppressed disgust, pushed the plate away from him.

"I am just going into the spare room for a bit," he said; "I can't go back to my own quarters just now, as there is a man waiting to murder me."

Poor fellow!

When I had finished I lighted my cigar and strolled over to the empty room opposite my door to give J. a friendly word before I went down to the office. There were quarters for two Assistants over the Custom House, separated

by the common mess-room. One side was at present unoccupied, save by a bed and a table left behind.

I paused in the mess-room and listened. From the half-open door of the vacant room came a quavering, cracked, old voice that I positively could not have recognised, singing—

“Then wh-y did you l-eave and forsa-ake
me?”

“Then wh-y did you l-eave and forsa-ake
me?”

It was a line from the song “Queen of my Heart,” or the tune was, anyhow—a melancholy, plaintive refrain; but the quavering, cracked old voice did not go on with tune, but was crooning the same melancholy line over and over again, the same, in the same slow, melancholy, quavering croon. I gently pushed the door open.

J. took no notice of my entry. He was half sitting on an upturned empty packing-case in the middle of the bare white-floored room. On

a chair in front of him (he was half facing the door in which I stood looking at him) was an open book, upside down, to represent a piece of music. His battered old oak stick was in his right hand. He was moving it slowly and shakily up and down his left elbow, like the bow of a violin. His head was perched on one side, squinting at the open book—nodding slowly to his song. And he was singing this melancholy, unfinished refrain to himself.

Anything more lonely and desolate than that gaunt, angular figure in the middle of that big bare room, with its head perched on one side, the big purple nose, the quavering song, and the vacant eye—anything more desolate, more miserable, more heartrending I have never seen. And to make the desolation more fearful, a gleam of sunshine shot through the balcony window, and a derelict strip of muslin curtain fluttered gaily in a little puff of cool breeze.

Unspeakably saddened, my eye

moved beyond him. Motionless, in one of the alcoved French windows, behind him stood the Fat Boy. He was smiling.

The Fat Boy was smiling—the big, baby smile. Only one acquainted with him would have seen the pathos of that smile. Only one acquainted with him would have seen in it the agony of a simple, faithful nature torn to the heart. It was no smile. It was the contortion of unuttered sobs.

The Fat Boy was watching over his master—and waiting.

I gave him a look of voiceless sympathy and went out, gently closing the door behind me. The mournful, desolate refrain and the cracked, pathetic voice, followed me quaveringly down the staircase. I was touched. Something must be done. I would get the fellows together directly after office, and arrange to treat him kindly, and make him happy and comfortable.

When I came up at four he was

dead. The Fat Boy had laid him on the sheetless spare bed and was kneeling by his side with his head buried in his master's clammy hand, sobbing. When I came in he got up and stood at attention, and smiled. I took his hand in both of mine and bowed my head.

“Going to J.’s funeral? Beastly nuisance, is n’t it? Still, ’spose one ought just to put in an appearance, though he was such a confounded old drunkard. Who ’d ever thought of his going off? Ha, ha! That dose of the horrors was about the best thing I ’ve heard for a month or two. ’Pletely took me in ’t first —’pon my oath it did! The old scamp! ”

“By the by, have you heard what ’s become of that coolie of his? Deuced economic chap, so they say, and don’t squeeze. You ’re a sort of chap that knows where to put your fingers on these fellows: send him round and I ’ll give him a trial at four dollars a month. Ought to be

able to get 'im cheap now he 's out of work, eh ? Soon lick 'im into shape —make a good shooting coolie."

A member of a certain English mission refused to bury J. because, I believe, he had died in his sin ; so we got an American Baptist to read the service, and had him lowered into the sod. There was a talk of getting up a subscription for a tombstone, but I don't know whether it came to anything. He was the oldest resident in the place, always a gentleman, always clean and neatly dressed, and was supposed to have a little income of his own ; but then, you see, when they came to examine his effects they found he was a pauper and possessed just a few well-brushed old suits and well-washed old shirts, and that his boy had fed and furnished him, unremunerated, for a long time past, so the project of a memorial stone was dropped. He has dropped into his nameless grave, and in a week was utterly forgotten by those who had met him daily for twenty years.

Only one man remembers him.

I sometimes pass the Fat Boy on his way to the market, and he greets me with a smile. He has not taken service with foreigners again, but lives with his family in a mud hut at the foot of the camp hill. Can it be he who puts the little heathen propitiatory paper by the tombless grave?

POSTSCRIPT.—To round off this study I append a copy of the actual complaints written out by poor J. The original should still be in the archives of the British Consulate at Chinkiang.

“The following are the facts of a cowardly attack made upon the writer on the evening of the 11th inst. The writer herein mentioned was called the most violent names and threatened with life. Sure enough in the evening the villains herein mentioned made their appearance; with rifle and knives, intent upon taking life. And of

this fact Messrs. M—— and C. were aware ; and saying for God's sake don't take life the villain Bultz we are going to finish him and his companion shouted go you work the rifle and I 'll knife him, having no assistance at my command ; and moreover unarmed I had no option but to place myself at their mercy frequent cries from outside were heard saying don't take life the man has done you no harm. Bultz replied oh we 'll fix him the — ! Very fortunately some assistance came and my life was spared for that evening, however, I was still hounded about by the man Bultz, who still persisted that he would have my liver ; this cheering information was given to me on the morning of the 12th inst. Wherever and whenever I met the man Bultz I was assailed with the *most* powerful not to say unprovoked language—last evening the man Bultz was sitting on my wall in disguise, clearly waiting his time for using his cowardly weapon.

having no arms of my own in the house, and with the man Bultz already within the boundary, I deemed it advisable to leave, and went to the house of a friend where I tarried for a night. I may here mention that an eminent member of the community took an active part in the attempt upon my life namely Geo. Moth at whose instigation time and court will tell. This gentleman remarked on several occasions shoot him."

Here it ceases. I suppose the rage at this last idea rendered further writing impossible: Geo. Moth was the harmless clerk of a gentleman who had formerly employed J., and afterwards "turned him out of house and home," as the poor old fellow would say.

Was ever more pathetic document published than this? more psychologically curious? Its genuineness is written on its face; no need to say that I should not have the ability to compose it. It was

perhaps cruel of me to urge him to write out his complaint and then to copy it ; but it can do him no harm now ; it seemed to us then only a trifling accentuation of what we had come to consider almost his normal state. He had been our butt so long !

And this time he died.

THE END.

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